"Where there is no vision the people perish"

MAY 1943 JUNE

The Poetry Review

One Shilling Net

(Annual Postal Subscription, 6s. 6d.; U.S.A., 2 Dollars)

The Journal of the Poetry Society (Incorporated) and a magazine of general poetic interest published in England bi-monthly by

THE POETRY SOCIETY (INCORPORATED), 33 Portman Square, London, W.1

American Editorial Office: 299 Park Avenue, New York

"The leading poetry magazine of the world . . . of international eminence"
—LITERARY DIGEST

THE POETRY REVIEW

Vol. XXXIV MAY—JUNE, 1943 No. 3

PAGE

Poetry Sounds a Warning, W. Wolff 133

Science is not Enough, Nancy Pollok 135

Native Earth, G. E. O. Mullins 136

An Old Man's Prayer, Gladys Hunkin 136

Periodic Inspiration in Poetry and Music, Dr. J. H. Douglas Webster 137

Ambition, Reginald C. Eva 140

English Poetry in the Thirty Years subsequent to the Death of Queen Victoria, Edmund Casson 141

Evacuation (Two Days), Alan Rook 144

Voice in the Wilderness: a Note on the Unacknowledged Lawrence, Dallas Kenmare 145

On Being Posted to Scotland, Giva Dane 148

Milton and the Modern Mood, G. E. Long 149

Wendlebatch, Arthur Lynnford-Smith 159

Time of Cherries, Margaret Stanley Wrench 160

Most Slow Death, H. O. Marshall 160

Another Survey by Peter Baker 161

The Poetry of Edith Sitwell, Ellode Collins 163

Cloister at Noontide, Doris Major 165

"There is no Depth in this Davies," Dulcie Eden Greville 167

The Poet, W. R. Latham 168

The Woman I Made in June, Geoffrey Dobbs 168

Search, Harry Sefton 169

I Stand Alone, R. E. K. Thesiger 170

Dynamics of American Poetry, XCVII, Alice Hunt Bartlett 171

Romantics and Others, Roland Gant 179

Poets and Pretenders: a series of short reviews 182

Correspondence: "The Poet and the New Era," W. A. G. Kemp, Noel A. Jones; "Concentrate on Concentration," E. J. Bryant; War and Poetry, Peggy Bond; The Explosive Power of Poetry, Peter Raily; The Addition to "Christabel," Howard Parsons, and other letters 187

The Premium Editor's Report; A Translation from the Desert, Capt. David Tennant; An Addition to Goldsmith by Howard Parsons 191

In Memoriam, Arthur Russell 193

Centenary of a Great Poetry Publishing House 193

The Ballet, Cynthia Morris; *Plea for Survival,* Marie Tello Phillips 194

Notes: Reports: Announcements 195

All literary communications should be addressed to the Editor, THE POETRY REVIEW, 33 Portman Square, London, W.C.1. No MSS. can be considered or returned unless accompanied by stamped addressed envelope. The Editor accepts no responsibility for the safe custody or return of any MS.

Printed in Great Britain by Diemer & Reynolds Ltd., 26-30 Midland Road, Bedford, and Published by the Proprietors, The Poetry Society (Incorporated), at 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, England.

POETRY SOUNDS A WARNING

IT has been said that the final justification of any art must be the leading of the spirit of man into greater happiness. The ornaments of life are precious belongings, but are of no avail unless man can achieve some freedom of body and spirit in which to appreciate them. It is therefore not out of place in time of war to emphasise that poetry is no mere ornament, but will serve us as guide, as inspiration and as warning.

This journal proclaims to us always that "Where there is no vision the people perish." Here is a warning indeed. The world is very sick to-day and never stood more in need of the inspired word of warning that can prevent a repetition of past errors. It is the man on the mountain top that first catches the flush of the rising sun and it is the poet on the summit of inspiration who first senses the direction of the storm and with his haunting words weaves a foreboding into the very texture of civilization.

Have the great poets in the past fulfilled this role of prophetic cautioner ? Perhaps not enough. Perhaps we have been too willing to regard poetry as a pretty ornamentation. We have not, however, been without poetical presages of the perils of our times. Tennyson's prophecy of the skies raining their "ghastly dew" is well known and his appeal to America perhaps hardly less so :

> Gigantic daughter of the West . . .
> Should war's mad blast again be blown,
> Permit not thou the tyrant powers
> To fight thy mother here alone,
> But let thy broadsides roar with ours.

Not as a daughter but as a sister America has twice joined hands with us. I think that handclasp will never now be relinquished.

For many years after 1918 we grew accustomed to see, once a year, John McCrae's warning preached to us by poppy-covered posters :

> If ye break faith with us who die
> We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
> In Flanders fields.

Perhaps for some of us familiarity dulled the poignancy of that warning and now, as we live once again through days of war, I often think of those sombre lines of Christina Rosetti's beginning :

> Does the road wind up-hill all the way ?
> Yes, to the very end.

Poetry is, however, of the spirit, and it is in the realms of spirit that poetry has been most ardently the stern prophet. All are at this time looking forward to a freedom and a casting off of restraints when the war is over, and in this mood we note the insistence with which our poets have warned against the supposed paradise of emotional and spiritual freedom.

It is tersely expressed by Wordsworth :

> Me this uncharted freedom tires ;
> I feel the weight of chance-desires.

At greater length Matthew Arnold has repeated the warning. Again likening the human spirit to a helmsman he, always at his finest in sea passages, draws this sad picture of absence of emotional restraint :

> There the freed prisoner, where'er his heart
> Listeth, will sail . . . .
> And then the tempest strikes him ; and between
> The lightning-bursts is seen
> Only a driving wreck,
> And the pale master on his spar-strewn deck
> With anguish'd face and flying hair
> Grasping the rudder hard,
> Still bent to make some port he knows not where,
> Still standing for some false impossible shore.
> And sterner comes the roar
> Of sea and wind, and through the deepening gloom
> Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman loom,
> And he too disappears and comes no more.

Is it not strange that poets, who surely of all men demand to move most freely amongst heightened emotions, should be the ones to warn most earnestly of their dangers ? Perhaps it is because of their own peculiar danger in these deep waters that they have felt moved to warn those who follow. Certain it is that he who sets out in hedonistic mood, as did Matthew Arnold's chartless helmsman, will find in those turbulent seas many warning lights placed by the poets of yesterday.

In this mood were written by Rachel Annand Taylor those beautiful lines, full of the brilliancy and colour of the very things she warned against :

> O ye that look on Ecstasy
> The Dancer lone and white,
> Cover your charmed eyes, for she
> Is Death's own acolyte.
> She dances on the moonstone floors
> Against the jewelled peacock doors :
> The roses flame in her gold hair,
> The tired sad lids are overfair . . . .

Against the rich imagery of these lines contrast the curt warning of Angelus Silesius :

> Whate'er thou lovest, man,
> That too, become thou must ;
> God, if thou lovest God,
> Dust, if thou lovest dust.

It is necessary in closing to look at the reverse of these examples of sombre poetic coin. It would be sad indeed if poetry were to be merely a sequence of warnings. This would envisage a world of caution in which the spirit of man could not breathe and flourish. It would reduce us to

the state of the caged bird, seeing on each side of him visions of what might be, but finding a barrier at each raising of his wings.

But, to the wise, freedom and constraint are not opposites. The earth itself bears majestic witness to this. Hurtling through myriads of miles of chaotic space, never does she lose contraining touch with the sun, but at the appointed second turns her people into the morning light.

Some of the careful of mind fill the cup of life most sparingly so that they shall be certain of spilling nothing. The unsteady fingers of some who strain to keep the glass always full spill much of the iridescence of life and find at the end that they have nothing left. He who lives most happily fills the glass to the very brim but learns to spill no drop. In that full cup is the power and glory of life. There it stands until its brilliant shimmer is grasped and held up to the true light by a steady unshakable hand. That is its triumphant consecration.

WILLIAM WOLFF.

SCIENCE IS NOT ENOUGH

SCIENCE is not enough—Man must have God,
Must have a concept of perfection
Towards which his soul may soar.
The vision of perfected man is not enough,
There needs must be divinity,
Else man
Will worship himself, and from thence
Come all the evils of pride
And tyranny
That torture these bitter years.

Man must have a God
Of justice and mercy and truth,
Lest in his own vain glory
He should destroy himself;
His soul must kneel but it cannot
Kneel to itself.
He must forget his ego in adoration
Of something beyond and above.
In this way only
Can man achieve at length
The vast
Unconquerable empire of the spirit
Which is his final goal.

NANCY POLLOR.

NATIVE EARTH

CAESAR rode out proud and strong;
All the Romans turned aside
Bitter with an ancient wrong;
Weary of Imperial pride,

Turned their eyes the other way;
Even the soldiers' hearts grew dim.
Romans turned their heads away,
Earth had still a place for him.

Christ looked down on the City wall,
Wept above Jerusalem,
None would harken to his call,
Earth alone had place for Him.

Twisted Judas turned aside,
Spurned by all the ages grim,
Hated by himself he died.
Earth had still a place for him.

If from wandering round the Earth
Strange and old and poor I be
In the country of my birth—
Earth has still a place for me.

G. E. O. MULLINS.

AN OLD MAN'S PRAYER

THE birch I planted long ago,
Some fifty years or so,
Has reached along with me,
Maturity.

With grace of filmy leaf again
To youth it will attain—
A thought I cannot bear,
And I not there.

My day is closing oversoon,
O Lord grant this one boon
Before my reckoning—
Just one more spring!

GLADYS HUNKIN.

PERIODIC INSPIRATION IN POETRY AND MUSIC*

. . she saw
Time like a pulse shake fierce
Through all the worlds.

AS our bodies in their functions (as breathing) show rhythms, and in their growth and development show stages or periods (as Shakespeare's *Ages of Man*), so it is likely that the mind has its cycles, other than those of sleep and waking, or those caused by the seasons of the year.

In a few poets and musicians, and in several other writers and scientists, it has been found that the "peaks" of their productiveness show a cycle or rhythm, based on a cycle which in recent years has been found to be operative in a number of widespread diseases (as tuberculosis, cancer, influenza, malaria, and a number of other infective, metabolic, nervous or mental diseases). Such a widespread range suggests some earth-wide natural cause; and it is suggested that the physical cause of this cycle is the minor cycle in sun-spot activity first discovered by R. Wolf of Zurich in 1859. [The 11-yearly sun-spot cycle (with its minor 4- and 7-year waves) has been known for some time to affect plant life, as in the breadth of annual tree-rings; and animal life, in epidemics and in other ways; and the 7.6 months (33 weeks ± 3 weeks) cycle of Wolf has been shown to affect growth in the California Redwood trees.]

Cabanis (1802), Goethe (1828), Dowden (1875) and Alice Meynell (1893) are among those who have suggested that thought, specially in artistic creation, is subject to rhythm. But apart from the monthly (27-28-day) cycle—an eighth of the period, and the 7-yearly cycle—eleven periods, no attempts have been traced which have led to the recognition of any definite rhythmic "laws of thought." [The monthly cycle has been studied in a much too rigid way by Fliess (1906, 1923); and the 7-year cycle has been studied by Swoboda (1917), from a heredity aspect in human records and in race-horses.]

Wolf's 7.6 months' period, found to be operative in some cases of mental cyclic disorder, has been found be the basis of the peaks of creative activity in the following:

(1) Rupert Brooke, Keats, Shelley, Gray, Victor Hugo; Mozart, Rimsky-Korsakov, Tschaikovsky, Sibelius (in all these *monthly* data are available).

(2) Christina Rossetti, Anne Bronté, Goethe (often), Platen, Schutze; Schubert (often) (in these *daily* data are usually available).

In many artists the data needed (at least *monthly*) have not been recorded in the Biographies or Collected Works consulted: thus, in the

*Abstract of an address given to The Poetry Society, April 9th, by Dr. J. H. Douglas Webster, with Lord Horder in the chair.

instances of Coleridge, Wordsworth and Whittier, only *yearly* data are given as a rule.

Several of the above-mentioned artists suffered from tuberculosis, which has a similar cycle of relapses; but in others there was nothing to indicate that disease played any part in the cycles of their productiveness.

The periods of creative activity can be appreciated best if the dates of the artist's works are charted out graphically on scaled paper. Such charts have been prepared for Rupert Brooke, Keats and Shelley (monthly data); and for Christina Rossetti (daily data); also for the "onsets" of ten artists (*i.e.*, first signs of creativeness above the ordinary level).

Studies can hardly be carried out in detail, or in many instances, without a Table of Dates at 7.6 months' intervals (as one published by me). But when greatly abbreviated the periods may be recognised if the main "peaks" are tabulated as follows :

KEATS

Periods (7.6 m.)	*Dates*	*Works (peaks)*
	1816, October	*Chapman's Homer* sonnet (first poem showing genius).
1	1817, May	*Endymion* begun;
1	1818, January	*Endymion* finished; "When I have fears" sonnet.
1	1818, September	*Hyperion* begun;
1	1819, May-April	*Hyperion* ended; Odes :
½	1819, September	*Autumn* ode; (Letters).
1	1820, April	*La belle Dame* revised.
½	1820, September 2	*Bright Star* revised.

A full analysis of the dates of the works of Keats would occupy much more space than can be given here. But it may be noted that his other better poems were mostly composed on the five half-periods from November, 1815, to May, 1817, and on the five half-periods (very slightly longer) from January, 1818, to September, 1819: in the intermediate months as a rule only minor compositions were produced. *Endymion* and *Hyperion* (first draft) were composed on "plateaux," each lasting about 7.6 months. (These "terraces" or "plateaux" are characteristic in some diseases.) Shelley, in some of his longer poems, shows similar "plateaux" of creativeness.

Much interest relates to the detailed chart prepared from the *daily* data available for the poems of Christina Rossetti: the years 1856-1860 were chosen, as her brother, William Michael, said in his Memoir, these were among the "least unhealthy years" of her womanhood. As she wrote in all about 1,050 poems, very many dated to the day, and most of them were quite short, the data are of great value. Eight "half-periods" in polyphases are shown from January 20th to December 31st, 1856; and three periods (in polyphase) (January 20th to September 11th; March 12th to October 28th; and April 14th to November 28th).

33 dates of poems in the years 1856-1860 are interconnected by periods or half-periods, or by their multiples or sub-multiples. Half periods are seen both in the 15 weeks' and 18 weeks' varieties, as in the 16½ weeks' type. Many dates are accurate *to the day* on the 7.6 months basis.

In Christina Rossetti can be traced well two corollaries of the theory here suggested. One is that, as indicated above in the notes on Keats, minor compositions are usually written on dates intermediate between the main periods. I can confirm this aspect from my MS. copies of my own rejected poems (pen-name: Colin Tolly); almost always the better compositions have been written at "periods"; and whenever an "urge" to compose has been at an interval, or at a very minor "period" (as a 27-28-day one, which does not coincide with a 7.6 one, or its half or quarter), then the result as a rule has been mediocre. The second corollary is that certain ideas or moods are periodic. Thus, Christina Rossetti has several poems describing nightmares: these are all periodic. A similar relationship has been traced in the case of Goethe, as regards his inspiration from Greek subjects; and in the case of Platen in several of his topics for poems.

Seven- and 11-year periods have been traced in Gray, Southey and Goethe, among others. They can only be referred to briefly here. The 7-year period was first noted by Pythagoras, and was known to Cicero and Seneca.

The ancient and some modern theories of "inspiration" would require much space for anything like an adequate discussion. In the encyclopaedias the subject is dealt with usually under the main or sole topic of religious inspiration. Meric Casaubon, in 1656, published the second edition of one of the best studies I have found of "enthusiasm" (apart from religious aspects): he discussed it under general headings and five special types, as rhetorical, poetical and philosophical (he hoped to have included musical and military among other types which remained undescribed). In these spheres he held it was "natural," and neither divine nor diabolical. Writing in the days when witchcraft and astrology had many believers his work is full of a wisdom much in advance of his time. Goethe, in his *Conversations with Eckermann* (1828), had much of value to say about inspiration or "productiveness": remarkable discoveries and thoughts are not in the power of anyone; they are "elevated above all earthly control. Man must consider them as an unexpected gift from above, as pure children of God, which he must receive and venerate with joyful thanks." A. J. (Lord) Balfour (1895) said of inspiration that it is "limited to no age, to no country, to no people . . . . every addition to knowledge, whether in the individual or in the community, whether scientific, ethical or theological, is due to a co-operation between the

human soul which assimilates and the Divine power which inspires."

From the psychological point of view inspiration can arise on various levels of importance; and on the side of the emotions, the thoughts or the will, or in various combinations. Music usually springs up as a *mood* first of all; and many poems and other works of art have begun in this way. How it comes in the realm of *ideas* has been explained perhaps best by William James (1892), as the unsought meeting of two ideas by free association causing an "explosion." Middleton Murry, in his illuminating study of Keats's *Chapman's Homer* sonnet (1928-1929), showed how the reading of Homer in translation throughout one night, with his friend Clarke, was as a "spark to ignite a highly combustible gas in the poet's mind into a flash of perfect incandescence. The force of the explosion is as great as the flame is beautiful." Dr. Rosamond Harding, in her valuable study, *An Anatomy of Inspiration* (1940), advocates a similar "flash" theory.

The subject here brought forward has many theoretical and practical aspects of importance. How many examination candidates have failed unexpectedly because the date chosen happened to be one when their memory and powers of expression were not at their best? Horace, in the *Art of Poetry* said, "You should speak or do nothing if Minerva is unwilling" (*Tu nihil invita dices facieme Minerva*). And Goethe advised that one should "force nothing, and rather trifle and sleep away all unproductive days and hours." The misery many artists have endured in times of fallowness or depression would have been lessened had they recognised the inevitableness of rhythm in creation: men—"if they would be wise, must wake and rest in its phases" (Alice Meynell). Further research certainly is called for in this promising field.

J. H. Douglas Webster.

AMBITION

NOT wealth, that crumbles into clay;
Not pomp of power, that ends in dust;
Not fame, whose trumpet dies away—
Not these I seek. In quiet trust
I seek but this: the rhymes I weave,
Like seedlets blown on summer air
That tireless range, at dawn or eve
Shall find at last a garden fair
To waken their fertility
And blossom in eternity.

Reginald C. Eva.

ENGLISH POETRY IN THE THIRTY YEARS SUBSEQUENT TO THE DEATH OF QUEEN VICTORIA

(A Fragment of a Myth unearthed in 2000 A.D. and here presented for the information of the writers and readers unacquainted with pre-1940 poetry).

THE soul of Er the Pamphylian was but twelve days escaped from the body when it returned to earth. My own visit to the realms of darkness, however, has been close on a century; and I return even more purified from the grosser fumes of corporeal existence.

I beg to report, therefore, that only poetry is remembered on the Elysian fields. After Lethe has been drunk, at first a pleasing drowsiness steals over the senses and all is forgot. But shortly a sweet song, like the music of the spheres, charms the awakened dream and with this are mingled voices of our terrene poets. The prose-writers are unheard entirely, only rhythmic utterance penetrating to those Fortunate Abodes.

Returning, therefore, to the outer air, I am enabled to verify that intimation of immortality which I long entertained in my earlier life. Only the poets are held in everlasting remembrance; and coming, therefore, to speak of the thirty years of English literature subsequent to the death of Queen Victoria only the poets shall I consider.

Two masters of English literature and one engaging figure passed away in 1909. The supreme poet of the Victorian age, Swinburne, the year of whose birth coincided with the Queen's accession, had well nigh completed his poetic achievement with the dawn of the twentieth century. Almost wholly deaf he lived in retirement at Putney, under the guardianship of Watts-Dunton; and is said every morning on "twinkling feet"—according to Mr. Harold Nicholson—to have crossed Wimbledon Common in his mid-day walk. He has at least celebrated the birth of hawthorn and the coming of Spring there—likening the brightening of May to ripples of song on the Orphean lyre. So died away on the listening breeze the last fingerings of the last great minstrel.

George Meredith died also in 1909. But his poetic work had been completed in a former century; and only a noble fragment on Milton for his tercentenary in 1908 awoke memories of the earlier vibrant harp.

In 1909 also perished John Davidson—to all seeming of his own intention. Impelled, as he said, by the venom of private enmities and baffled, no doubt, in his designs upon the phial that should give corporeal immortality, he flung himself over the cliffs of the Channel coast. His work is, in the last degree, stimulating. He has, indeed, something of Lucretian passion and intensity of scientific crusade—to awaken men to a belief in the irrelevance to Nature's plan of physical death. In flaming metaphor and volcanic verse, this gospel is poured out in his dramas built up about the northern coast of Elsinore and a dynasty which recalls

Hamlet, but in Mammon symbolises no doubt an anti-theistic purpose. Being unwilling to serve God, the poet apparently calls on his readers to bow before a new Prince of this world. The technical skill of his versification is very great and is supported by an interesting excursus on the nature of rhyme, which is termed a decadent medium, the rouge on the face of the wanton and other fantastic *trivia*.

The reign of his sacred Majesty, King Edward VII, was distinguished by two poets. The plays of Stephen Phillips—"Paolo and Francesca," "Herod" and "Ulysses"—constituted an heroic attempt to restore the Elizabethan manner to our stage and to assert the rightful sovereignty of blank verse. "Marpessa," a narrative poem, challenges comparison with the Greek narrative poems of Keats. The fable is one of the most human that has come down from the mythic age—the choice by a Greek maiden of her mortal lover in preference to the god. But the passage descriptive of Apollo's beneficent office in heaven is one of great beauty; while Marpessa's own choice of Earth and Love and Death has the Sophoclean pathos.

William Watson sought to extol King Edward in his Coronation Odes, but may be said to have fallen below Dryden in his endeavour. His "Wordsworth's Grave"—though not subsequent to Victoria—has been unduly lauded, even if it be his most considerable work. I cannot find in his delineation of Shelley or Coleridge that felicity which many praise. My chance meeting with Shelley on the fields of asphodel, my ears being purged of all earthly utterance, has led me to acclaim him as wholly divine. In my former existence I described him as working too often without aim or end and hesitated to place him above Spenser. Instructed by Diotima, however, I hasten to write my palinode. Watson's epigram on Byron, on the other hand, is too little known. It is by these four lines that he is remembered among the immortals.

The reign of King George V was marked, at its outset, by the publication of a volume known as *Georgian Poetry*. This was inscribed to Robert Bridges, Poet Laureate; and it has been thought wise to leave the examination of that poet to this point. Born in 1844, Bridges was educated at Eton and Corpus Christi College, Oxford; practised for a time as house surgeon at St. Thomas' Hospital; and finally retired to live above the City of Sacred Learning on Boar's Hill, overlooking the weirs of the Thames and dwelling in a summer mist of bluebells.

Milton was confessedly Bridges' master; but, beyond the fact that the later poet wrote masques and adopted an archaic spelling, the discipleship is not quite manifest. Of the masques, "Demeter" was written for the ladies of Somerville College, and there produced. It is possessed of the most airy fantasy and charm, the blank verse inter-

mingled with Alcaics, whose Doric grace might ravish Sir Henry Wotton. The description of flowers has a more than Spenserian fidelity; and Aidoneus is worthy of Claudian. Indeed, it would scarcely be bold to set our English masque beside the Roman's "De Raptu Proserpinae."

"Prometheus the Fire-bringer" challenges at once Aeschylus and Shelley. Its attempt at a modern scientific cosmogony, or rather theogony, is nearer the former of the two. But, though the personifications of Aether and Aer have a bold mythopoeic faculty recalling the pre-Socratic philosophers, Anaximenes and Empedocles, more than the poets, the masque, as a whole, falls below the divine fable of Shelley. It is stiff, like the archaic Greek statuary, not having the immortal fluid line of Praxiteles.

The "Eros and Psyche" is a long narrative poem from the "Golden Ass" of Apuleius. It is written in the *ottava rima* measure, but more quaint and mannered than the "Witch of Atlas." The stanzas introducing the names of the Nereids, like the hexameters of Virgil in the Fourth Georgic, are of singular felicity.

The shorter lyrics of Bridges contain perhaps his best-known work. Of these, "London Snow," "On a Dead Child," and the poem descriptive of an unknown ship are of surpassing beauty; but the most lovely is the poem on Eton, with its record of youth and noble discipline within "the angel-guarded gate." So is Bridges linked to Gray and Shelley and Swinburne.

Of this Laureate's contemporaries, Hardy's chief poem within our period was his "Dynasts." The blank verse has been modelled on Shakespeare's and the poem is termed an "Epic Drama." But it has none of the true qualities of the Epic, as I heard from Maeonides beyond the flow of Acheron. These cloudy impersonations of the Pities and the Ironies—what are they, he asked? Aphrodite and Pallas Athene are gone, and the "large utterance of the early gods."

The poets whose select works appeared in *Georgian Poetry* had one quality in common. After the Romantic Movement of Wordsworth and Landor had spent itself in Swinburne, these later poets appeared as the Caroline lyrists after the great Elizabethan epoch. Indeed, this was one of their professed watchwords—the study of the Caroline poets and the vogue of Donne. In this Georgian group the most noteworthy at the time was Rupert Brooke. He had in a peculiar degree the Cavalier spirit—not so much in his 1914 sonnets, which are, despite their immediate fame, a thin echo of "King Henry V," as in his love lyrics. Brooke embodied all that was most characteristic of the public school and junior Don spirit of his period; and this attitude finds consummate expression in "The Fish," "Dust" and "Grantchester." Flecker is frequently coupled with Brooke, but he had none of the athletic quality of the

Rugbeian. He adopted the watchwords of the Parnassian school; but even the "Golden Journey to Samarcand" falls far short of that austerity which is ascribed to Leconte de Lisle.

The purest "pure poetry" of our epoch is, perhaps, to be found in the neo-Celtic school. Indeed, the Irish poets have this in common with the Greek poets that their country still possesses a native mythology of its own. Matthew Arnold exhorts the poet to "lay hold of the right subject-matter for poetry"; and the Irish alone, after the great poets of antiquity, have a perfect subject-matter. All others are groping in the dark for their subject, either like Masefield, seeking it where it is not, or like Walter de la Mare, probing in abysmal subjectivity for a psychological candle that goes out in the damp. Mr. Yeats, since the fall of Athens, has alone apprehended the right subject-matter of poetry. But he has not the wing of the Theban eagle.

While I stood by the whorls of Necessity I saw, not Ardiaeus, but those of the twentieth century, so famous in their day but now on earth forgotten. And at this point I returned to corporeal existence.

EDMUND CASSON.

EVACUATION
(TWO DAYS)

day one

BY the patient sea
and homesick sand-dunes,
by docks and quays
rank with the smell of blood.

rank with death and blood.

night

In the darkness life
sings sadly from the sand-dunes;
the army throws
its wishes across the sea.

across the hopeful sea.

day two

Another day of wishes
embraces the army
on docks and quays
scenting the acrid blood.

scenting the hopeful blood.

ALAN ROOK.

VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

A NOTE ON THE UNACKNOWLEDGED LAWRENCE

"PEACE and war lie in the heart," D. H. Lawrence wrote in a letter to Cynthia Asquith in 1916:

> "Nations are external material facts. The reality of peace, the reality of war, lies in the hearts of the people; you, me, all the rest."

And at the end of the same letter he said:

> *"To be material at this juncture is hopeless, hopeless—and worse than impractical.* Only the living heart and the creative spirit matter—*nothing else."*

"The living heart and the creative spirit." It was because he cared so deeply for the living heart and the creative spirit that his poetry, the purest expression of the living heart, comes nearer to revealing the true Lawrence than any of his prose-writings, however magnificent—and magnificent is not an extravagant word for much of Lawrence's prose. In his *Study of Thomas Hardy* for example, he often soars to prodigious heights of insight and dynamic expression. And he foreshadows the phase of Christianity as yet only glimpsed by the few, the coming age of the Holy Spirit:

> It remains for us to know the Law and to know the Love, and further to seek out the Reconciliation. It is time for us to build our temples to the Holy Spirit, and to raise our altars to the Holy Ghost, the Supreme, who is beyond us but is with us.
>
> We know of the Law, and we know of Love, and to that little we know of each of these we have given our full expression. But have not completed one perfect utterance, not one.[1]

Here, he plainly hints at the conception of some utterance, some Word which could save the world. Similarly, other poets have felt that the contemplation of a single flower could bring salvation. A famous contemporary poet wrote in a letter recently:

> If, instead of killing one another people paid more attention to the amazing unfailing *perfection* of flowers and leaves and blades of grass then we might begin to speak of progress. This infallible perfection seems to me always the strongest argument in favour of free will. We are *allowed* to interfere—given the opportunity to make mistakes. Otherwise we too should show the same unfailing rightness.

And because we are allowed to interfere, science has disturbed the balance of Nature, and disaster follows. Therefore the intuition that the contemplation of a single flower might restore the world to sanity is no wild poet's dream. It happens, of course, that the poet's "dreams" are inevitably based on pure reason, but it usually takes humanity a generation or so to discover this, and the true prophets and innovators never have the joy of seeing their conceptions materialised; all they experience, usually, is persecution, or—what can be even more dispiriting

[1] *Phoenix* (p. 514).

sometimes—total indifference. Shelley is an outstanding example of this. Almost all the reforms he insisted upon have now been effected. At the time they were dismissed as so impracticable as to be unworthy of notice.

D. H. Lawrence understood the significance and curative power of the natural world, and when he wrote :

> All I want of you, men and women,
> all I want of you
> is that you shall achieve your beauty
> as the flowers do.[1]

he was giving utterance to a profound truth. For in the flower, purpose, development and fulfilment are implicit ; the pattern is never distorted—unless by man's intervention ; from the moment of birth to the moment of fruition, when the formed and perfected seed falls to the ground to give birth to yet another flower, the process is inevitable and consummate. In the life of man, however, purpose, development and fulfilment are usually distorted, until there is no understanding of purpose, only crippled development, and rarely fulfilment, either on the physical or the spiritual plane. And the reason for the distortion, the frustration lies in man's subversion of natural law. Until he re-learns these laws, destruction and chaos must prevail. The return to Nature, urged by artists and spiritual leaders, will not necessarily mean a retreat from and rejection of scientific discoveries ; it will mean, simply, that science, instead of opposing Nature, will ensure that its own activities in no way contravene or distort natural law, but co-operate with it, and in such co-operation true balance and fulfilment will at last be achieved. As always, co-operation alone can prove creative.

Lawrence was the truest prophet of the last hundred years ; it would be safe to say that no poet since Shelley—with perhaps the exception of Whitman—has spoken with so powerfully prophetic a voice, but, sharing the common fate of all genuine reformers—those who know that true healing can only come from within outwards (just as with a physical wound), and that surface methods are not only ultimately useless but even pernicious—his message was incompletely understood, and consequently distorted and perverted, and his "disciples," rather than furthering the cause he came to serve, hindered its progress. It is monstrous that he should have achieved fame, or rather notoriety, almost exclusively as a prophet of sex, and a far less respectable prophet than Havelock Ellis. An equitable assessment of Lawrence's contribution to sexual psychology will probably not be made for a few hundred years or so ; it would be wiser therefore to suspend judgment, and to realise that because he was speaking of things beyond our immediate understanding,

[1] *Last Poems.*

and probably only dimly apprehended even by himself, we cannot expect to be able to absorb the full import of his message.

His articles, his poetry, and especially his letters, reveal the purity and penetration of his thought.[1] Indeed, it was his flaming purity that impelled him to crusade in the cause of sex. He knew that this most fundamental and vital of natural laws had been blasphemously distorted and transgressed and that not until men and women came to understand its true meaning and sanctity could there be hope of any genuine regeneration. His attitude to religion was equally revolutionary, and his criticisms of Christianity, though often as apparently wild and unbalanced as Blake's, likewise prove the purity and passion of his intention. When for example, he wrote to Lady Cynthia Asquith in May, 1915, "Believe me, in the end, we will unite in our knowledge of God," he was speaking from the depths of his being of the only salvation he could see for England and the world :

> Believe me, this England, we very English people, will at length join together and say "We will not do these things, because in our knowledge of God we know them wrong." We shall put away our greatness and our living for material things only, because we shall agree we don't want these things. We know they are inferior, base, we shall have the courage to put them away. We shall unite in our knowledge of God—not perhaps in our expression of God—but in our *knowledge* of God : and we shall agree that we don't want to live only to write and make riches, that England does not care only to have the greatest Empire or the greatest commerce, but that she does care supremely for the pure truth of God, which she will try to fulfil . . .[2]

He vividly and poignantly saw the one hope of salvation, yet even now, after the world has been stricken by yet another devastating war, there is no official representative of Christianity who has the courage to say what Lawrence, the so-called heretic and pagan, so passionately proclaimed. He knew, as only the religious genius knows, that the first necessity is to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all the rest—including, possibly, wealth and material possessions, and the riches of Empire—will be added, but these material things must never be put first, that is the sin—one of the seven deadly sins—which leads to war, mutual destruction and ultimate despair. Jesus said, and Lawrence echoed :

> Beware of covetousness : for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.[3]

Lawrence wrote :

> We must destroy the old Moloch of greediness and love of property and love

[1] In his novels he is not at his best.
[2] *Letters* (p. 227).
[3] Gospel according to St. Luke XII, 15.

> of power. Think what a splendid world we shall have, when each man shall seek joy and understanding, rather than getting and having.[1]

It is the nation which first comes to understand this law that will be fitted to direct—not rule—the world. All other talk, planning is vain and waste of time and effort. The Christian values, properly understood, alone have the power to transform and redeem ; until this is recognised, and the stupendous truth of the recognition accepted, there will be no hope and no chance of succour.

Lawrence was no believer in "democracy," or any other deceptively simple, superficial political panacea ; he knew human nature too well :

> I don't believe in the democratic electorate. The working man is not fit to elect the ultimate government of the country ;[2]

to him, as to all creative and realistic thinkers, it was clear that a further long period of education was essential before the people could be considered *ready* to elect their leaders.

> A bad spirit in a nation chooses a bad spirit in a governor. We must begin to choose all afresh, for the pure, great truth . . . We must rid ourselves of this ponderous incubus of falsehood, this massive London, with its streets and streets of nullity ; we must, with one accord and in purity of spirit, pull it down and build a beautiful thing.[3]

So he wrote in 1915 ; now, twenty-eight years later, yet another war has been instrumental in pulling down much of London, and many other cities, and there is ceaseless talk of rebuilding, but let us carefully consider the spirit of the planners and potential builders ; is it their intention to build cities of God, or will they, as in Wells's tragic and all-too prophetic film "Things to Come," still rely on the Janus-god Science, the two-faced god that can bring good or evil, progress or destruction ?

> Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it ; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman watcheth but in vain.[4]

DALLAS KENMARE.

[1] *Letters* (p. 231) ; [2] *Letters* (p. 227) ; [3] *Letters* (p. 248).
[4] Psalm 127.

ON BEING POSTED TO SCOTLAND

THEY say how much they envy me,
now I must pack and travel forth,
but they will have my cherry tree
when I am travelling to the north.

Too soon that drift of snow-white flowers
will lie behind me by twelve hours.

A.T.S. GIVA DANE.

MILTON AND THE MODERN MOOD

I AM only a plain reader of Milton's poetry. This, I believe, is a real qualification for dealing with Milton, because I have a shrewd suspicion that he is not much read to-day except by the scholar and the professional teacher. One reason for this neglect is that Milton has been left too long at the mercy of the scholar, and sometimes of the pedant, with the result that he has come to be regarded as a difficult and academic poet; and his verse has been left to moulder peacefully upon the library shelves. It was Horace, I believe, who foresaw for his verse the dreadful fate of becoming a school text-book, or was it Tennyson. That dreadful fate seems to have overtaken Milton; and now the plain reader of poetry prefers more fashionable stuff.

It is also true that in recent years there has arisen a school of criticism that would deny Milton his right to fame; but that is not the reason why I have chosen to speak about him. I have neither the inclination nor the ability to take part in the controversy that is at present being waged around his name. But I believe such controversy is all to the good. It is not from his detractors, however eminent they may be, that Milton chiefly suffers; but from a general indifference; and the present controversy will be a good thing if it can only raise sufficient wind to blow away the cobwebs from the poet's monumental reputation, and persuade people to open his books and read them. Certainly Milton, if he had been alive, would not have shrunk from the controversy. He could say more truly than Browning, "I was ever a fighter, so one fight more." He was a fighter if ever there was one; he would have thrown himself into the fray with at least as much gusto as any of his defenders or detractors, nor would there have been any button to his rapier.

But if the poetry-reader neglects Milton, it is not because he has any doubt about the poet's greatness, it is not because he has been influenced by Mr. T. S. Eliot and his friends; but because, as I have said, he has a vague feeling that Milton is a difficult poet, a dull poet, an academic poet; that the world in which Milton moves is, to use Milton's own words, a "fugitive and cloistered" world, withdrawn, remote, and altogether separate from the hurly-burly of our times. It is not that we doubt his genius, but we doubt his realism and his relevance. Also, the modern reader, is, of course, influenced by the prevailing modernism, which, like the ancient Athenians, is always eager "to tell or hear some new thing," and seldom pauses to consider if it may not sometimes be necessary and profitable to recall some old and well-known, yet forgotten thing. It is this spirit that sends the reading public to the bookshop for the latest publication of the newest author, while the great classics remain upon the shelves, universally admired and universally neglected.

Now the thesis that I wish to develop is just this: that, though at

first sight Milton may appear to be a very academic poet, and no doubt he is the most learned of English poets, yet in actual fact he is far more than this, he is a poet who put to an almost unique degree his own full and active life, into his poetry : he is fundamentally a realist ; and though superficially he may seem quite alien in temper to the spirit of our time, in reality there is no other English poet more worthy of a hearing at the present day, or more relevant to the present situation. On May 10th, 1940, when I heard the news of the German invasion of the Low Countries, realising that we were approaching a decisive moment in history, and trying to consider and estimate the causes that were being fought for, I turned almost naturally and inevitably to Milton ; and I know of no other English writer to whom I could have so turned at such a time. At a similar epoch in European history Wordsworth wrote, "Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour." And at any time when men find themselves facing the fundamental decisions of history, Milton, if they listen, will have an inspiring word to say to them, because those fundamental decisions are the themes that he made his own. This fact, however, may not at first be easily apparent to the modern reader, who may at first be repelled by the differences between Milton's work and the literature which is his normal nourishment. Let us consider for a moment the modern mood in poetry, and the stumbling-blocks that meet the modern as he approaches Milton.

I am here dealing only with the broad prevailing tendencies, to which there are, of course, many exceptions, and of which there are many modifications. But the prevailing mood is one of scepticism. Criticism has devoted quite a substantial portion of its eloquence and energy to debunking the past. But poetry has gone even further : it debunks society, civilisation, and even the universe itself. Instead of Hyperion, Prometheus, Alastor and King Arthur—Apeneck Sweeney, Mr. Prufrock, and Colonel Fantock become the heroes of modern verse. The poet fails to find God in his heaven, and spends his time railing against "whatever brute or blackguard made the world." That is Housman, and here he is in the same mood, his constant mood :

> Since the world has still
> Much good, but much less good than ill,
> I'd face it as a wise man would,
> And train for ill and not for good.

Here is Auden in the same mood :

> I've come a very long way to prove
> No land, no water, and no love.

And here is T. S. Eliot :

> This is the way the world ends

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.

Along with this scepticism there goes a preoccupation with the fact of death, death in its physical aspect. About death as about everything else the moderns refuse to idealise. They face the fact in all its grisly reality; they refuse to see anything but the corpse and the grave, "the skull beneath the skin," "the breastless creatures underground, "the ague of the skeleton."

When shall this slough of sense be cast,
This dust of thoughts be laid at last,
The man of flesh and soul be slain,
And the man of bone remain?

Yeats has commented on these bones that crop up so ubiquitously in modern verse; and they, I suppose are just a symbol of the moderns' grim determination to wipe off the paint and powder camouflage of sentiment, to tear away the trapping and trimmings of romance, and get down to the hard bare bone of tangible reality. The scepticism of the modern is just an uncompromising realism, a ruthless sincerity.

This revolt against sentimentism and romanticism is also a revolt against the past. I am not suggesting that the modern has no use at all for convention and tradition; but he feels the urge to set out on new adventures, to find new themes, to experiment with new forms. So there comes free verse, sprung verse, an abhorrence of traditional rhythms, a contempt for merely grammatical syntax, a resolute rejection of poetic diction, and a new procession of heroes and heroines, Farrier Randall, Danny Deaver, and Mrs. Hague, the gardener's wife. The poet seeks to free himself from the fetters of literary custom. Freedom, realism, sincerity—these, I suppose, are the professed watchwords of modern poetry.

Now if we turn from the moderns to Milton we seem to be moving in a completely alien world, a world where everything flourishes that the modern despises. To begin with, Milton is not a sceptic, he is a Puritan. To the modern his philosophy might appear as the shallowest optimism. He is so blatantly confident in the ultimate triumph of virtue. This extract from Comus is typical:

Against the threats
Of malice or of sorcery or that power
Which erring men call chance, this I hold firm
Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt,
Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled;
Yea even that which evil meant most harm
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory;
But evil on itself shall back recoil,

And mix no more with goodness, when at last
Gathered like scum, and settled to itself
It shall be in eternal restless change
Self-fed and self-consumed ; if this fail
The pillared firmament is rottenness
And earth's base built on stubble.

But Milton did not believe that the pillared firmament was rottenness or earth's base built on stubble, because he returns again and again to the same conviction :

He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i'the centre and enjoy bright day ;
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts
Benighted walks under the noonday sun
Himself is his own dungeon.

The mind is its own place, and of itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.

With this incorrigible optimism he joins a harsh and narrow religious faith. Moderns are repelled by his theology, his tyrannical and arbitrary deity, his puritanical Redeemer, and all the crude paraphernalia of his cumbersome cosmography. They question his proud boast "to justify the ways of God to man" ; and agree rather with Housman that

Malt does more than Milton can
To justify God's ways to man.

Milton was no realist in the modern sense. He too, deals with death; but he does idealise it :

Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor,
So sinks the day star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky.
So Lycidas, sunk low, but mounted high
Through the dear might of him that walked the waves,
Where other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the saints above
In solemn troops and sweet societies
That sing and singing in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.

Milton was also a traditionalist. His verse is all written inconventional forms. "Lycidas" is a pastoral elegy ; "Paradise Lost" an epic in the Vergilian manner ; and "Samson Agonistes" in the form of the Greek tragedy. Milton, unlike the moderns, does believe in poetic diction as

distinct from prose diction. He had an almost inexhaustible vocabulary of vigorous homely words, which he used to his heart's content in his prose work; but he resolutely refrained from using them in his poetry. Nor would he have believed that people like Apeneck Sweeney and Danny Deaver were characters suitable for serious poetry. Even his villains had to conform to a certain standard of dignity. Comus and Satan are gentlemen of a large and liberal culture, and fastidious in their choice of English. Such a finicking censorship, such spiritual and intellectual snobbery, has in it something repellent to modern taste.

In this as in almost everything else Shakespeare is a complete contrast to Milton. In Shakespeare's plays vulgar clowns and delicate ladies, low scoundrels and high-minded heroes jostle each other with a democratic indifference. We are attracted by Shakespeare's intense and tolerant humanity; we are repelled by Milton's utter inhumanity. Shakespeare bubbles over with genial and boisterous humour; Milton is completely humourless, the spectacle of Milton trying to be funny is something intolerably painful. Shakespeare was a realist. He fulfils his own definition of the artist's function, to hold up a mirror to nature. There are no story-book heroes in Shakespeare's plays. Even Othello who steps forth such a pattern of manhood, proves himself in the bitter outcome to be just a simple and deluded fool. These men and women, good, bad and indifferent, are real people meeting real situations, not gods and demi-gods, stalking in phantom splendour through a mythical universe.

And yet if we look below the surface we find that Shakespeare's very scepticism tends to deprive his world of ultimate meaning and significance, to deprive nature itself of reality. Life for Shakespeare becomes scarcely less of an illusion than this own dramas:

> All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players.
> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more; it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing.

It may be said that this is Macbeth, not Shakespeare. That may be so. But surely if ever we hear the authentic voice of Shakespeare, we hear it in Prospero's valedictory address, which is much to the same effect:

> The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which we inherit, shall dissolve,
> And like this insubstantial pageant faded
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded by a sleep.

Whether this is Shakespeare or not we do know that he seems to have lived his life serenely indifferent to the great events that were going on around him. They do not seem to have had any more significance for him than the action of his own dramas.

Fundamentally Milton was more of a realist than Shakespeare. For him the world is not simply a stage ; its men and women are not merely players ; life's not a walking shadow ; we are not such stuff as dreams are made on ; nor is our life just rounded by a sleep. For Milton, this earth is the scene of the divine activity ; its men and women are instruments of the will of heaven ; human life is a solemn duty performed under the eye of the great taskmaster ; and our mortal day is a significant moment in the great day of eternity. This faith is the foundation of all his work.

It was this faith that made him the great champion of liberty ; and it is above all his lifelong defence of freedom which entitles him to the hearing of our age. He himself claimed that all his great prose works were written to advance the cause of freedom. The "Areopagitica" was a defence of the freedom of the Press ; the tractate on education, aimed at the training of free citizens ; and the treatise on divorce was intended to safeguard domestic freedom. In his sonnets the word liberty is constantly heard. He appeals to Cromwell as the defender of liberty :

> Help us to save free conscience from the paw
> Of hireling wolves.

When he is asked by Cyriack Skinner what strength supports him in the loss of his eyes, he answers :

> The conscience to have lost them overplied
> In liberty's defence.

In his sonnet on the massacre in Piedmont, he attacks papal tyranny, and in "Lycidas," the tyranny of the English clergy. But his more serious poetry deals with a more fundamental freedom. His greatest work is a powerful assertion of the soul's autonomy ; and it is this which constitutes his strongest claim to the attention of our time.

And it is in this that the contrast between Milton and Shakespeare is most marked. Shakespeare does not believe in the autonomy of human soul. His great tragic characters are well entangled helplessly in the net of circumstance or of their own weakness, wickedness, or folly. Macbeth is driven inevitably down to the doom that opportunity and his own character have prepared for him. Hamlet is undone by the tyranny of his own faults and virtues. Othello is the dupe of Iago and jealousy and honesty. It is significant that so many of Shakespeare's tragic characters choose the coward's way out—suicide ; and Macbeth and Hamlet are not really exceptions, since their physical courage serves only to emphasise their moral cowardice. And is there anything more pathetic in literature

than Lear's last feverish futile hope of averting the consequences of his own foolishness ?

> She lives ; if it be so
> It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows
> That ever I have felt.

But she didn't live. There is no escape. Man is for ever the slave of his own blindness and selfishness. Whether the fault be in ourselves or in our stars, we are none the less underlings, that is Shakespeare's conclusion. In a well-known passage from the preface to "Man and Superman," Mr. Bernard Shaw has commented upon this Shakespearian conclusion, and commented, I believe, justly, "You see," he says, "that Shakespeare, with all his flashes and divinations never understood virtue and courage, never conceived how any man who was not a fool could look back from the brink of the river of death over the strife and labour of his pilgrimage, and say 'Yet I do not repent me'."

Milton did understand virtue and courage. One thing at least his heroes do, they preserve the integrity of their own souls. In "Comus" the brothers and their sister resist the baits of carnal pleasure. When the sister is imprisoned by the enchanter, she speaks words that are characteristically Miltonic :

> Fool, do not boast ;
> Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
> With all thy charms, although my corporal rinde
> Thou hast inmanacled while heaven sees good.

And in "Paradise Regained" the Redeemer resists the high spiritual temptations that are dangled so alluringly before him. It is true that in "Paradise Lost" Adam and Eve yielded to temptation ; but it has been said of Adam's life in Paradise that nothing became him like the leaving of it. Adam and Eve face their doom with a humble and quiet dignity that is both pathetic and impressive ; and there is something magnificent in it too :

> The world was all before them, where to choose
> Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.

What more could man ask for ? Even Satan closes the last speech of his career upon an exultant note :

> A world who would not purchase with a bruise
> Or much more grievous pain ? Ye have th' account
> Of my performance ; what remains, ye Gods,
> But up and enter now into full bliss.

And this is certainly more suitable to Satan's character than the awkward and artificial incident of the snakes that immediately follows. Milton had, of course, a strong sub-conscious sympathy for Satan, that doughty rebel battling to the bitter end against infinite odds. Then there is Samson,

"Eyeless, in Gaza, at the mill, with slaves," and yet the master of his own soul, and making his death the climax and vindication of his life.

It might, however, be said, "Yes, that is all very well, and it sounds very fine. But men are not like that. Life is not like that. Shakespeare knew more about men, and saw more deeply into human life than Milton; he described men as they are, and life as it is, not as he might wish them to be." And, of course, there is no doubt as to which of these two had the more comprehensive outlook and the more penetrating insight, nor would I presume to suggest that Milton was a greater artist than Shakespeare. But the fact of the matter is that Milton is not producing wonderful unreal heroes out of his own imagination. He was no creator of character as Shakespeare was. We might almost say that he never created any characters at all. L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, so the school books tell us, are not two different people, they are just descriptions of Milton in two different moods. And this might be said of all his characters. In "Comus" the brothers and their sister are just the mouthpiece of Milton. In "Paradise Lost," Adam is Milton; God the Father and God the Son are both Milton; and the Devil is Milton. In "Paradise Regained," the extremely Jewish Redeemer and the extremely Hellenic Tempter are both Milton. And above all Samson is Milton. These characters are not just ideal creatures, fighting phantom struggles and winning effortless victories in an imaginary world. They are Milton himself, wrestling with time and tide, with evil and tyranny. It was not just that his poetry was an assertion of the soul's integrity; his whole life was that assertion. He said that the man who wished to write true poetry ought himself to be a true poem, "not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men unless he have in himself the experience and practice of all that is praiseworthy." And he set himself to be that kind of poet. Let us look for a moment at the man and his life.

Milton might seem to be much more the child of his age than Shakespeare. In an age of Puritanism, he was Puritan. In the civil war he backed the winning side. Yet actually he had a mind of utter and fearless independence. When the Puritans were denouncing the drama as an invention of the devil, Milton wrote "Comus." He attacked the bishops when the bishops were on top, and he attacked the Presbyters when the Presbyters were on top. When he published the treatise on divorce he was denounced by nearly every pulpit in London. His tractate on education is bold, and surprisingly modern. For instance, he puts agriculture into the curriculum; and would have craftsmen and engineers on the staff of his school, and suggests that the boys should be sent out to the important towns to study trade and commerce at first hand. In his verse also he was a daring innovator. Though he admired Shakespeare and

Spenser, he does not seem to have been in the least under their influence. He rejected the usual variations of Elizabethan blank verse, and introduced new variations of his own, his own careful rules of elision, his own spelling, his own scholarly and elaborate syntax, his own choice vocabulary, his own masterly manipulation of the caesura. Even modern sprung verse derives from Milton; but no imitator seems to have caught the true Miltonic note. There is the famous chorus from "Samson," those words that might well go echoing through Europe to-day:

> O how comely it is and how reviving
> To the spirits of just men long oppressed,
> When God into the hands of their deliverer
> Puts invincible might.

The buoyant and unfettered lilt of that rhythm is surely something that has never been heard elsewhere in English verse, and one may well doubt whether it ever will be heard again.

But Milton's life was not just given over to the academic pursuit of poetic perfection. He was still training himself to produce his greatest work, when the Civil War broke out. Immediately he gave up his poetry, and threw himself into the struggle. The best part of his life was spent in work for the commonwealth. And it was this work that deprived him of his eyesight. He was told that unless he took some rest he would probably become blind. But at that time he was occupied with "The second defence of the English people," he refused to put it aside, and he became blind. Then the Restoration took place; and Milton was a marked man. He first of all lost nearly his whole fortune. Then he was arrested and only just escaped with his life. So he lived on, as Shelley has it:

> Blind, old and lonely, when his country's pride
> The priest, the slave, and the liberticide
> Trampled and mocked with many a loathèd rite
> Of lust and blood.

Or in his own nobler language:

> I sing with mortal voice, unchanged
> To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on evil days,
> On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues,
> In darkness and with dangers compast round,
> And solitude.

He lived on to see the triumph of all that he despised and hated; and it was in these circumstances that he turned again to his life's work, and fulfilled it. If ever a man preserved against odds the integrity of his own soul, that man was Milton; and in his last poem he is simply giving voice to his own experience. Like Samson, Milton was blind among enemies;

like Samson, he was unfortunate in his marriage choice; like Samson, he was

> A person separate to God,
> With gifts and graces eminently adorned
> For some great work;

and like Samson, his life's closing scene was its culminating triumph. Samson's glorious epitaph, with the alteration of only a single word, is almost literally true of Milton:

> Samson hath quit himself
> Like Samson, and heroically hath finished
> A life heroic.
> Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
> Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,
> Dispraise or blame, nothing but well and fair,
> And what may quiet us in a life so noble.

To sum up the whole matter. Almost every major act and choice of Milton's life was cast in the heroic mould. From the beginning he devoted himself with an almost superhuman single-minded concentration to the fulfilment of his poetic destiny. To that task he brought such a wealth of accumulated learning, as, I suppose, has scarcely ever been equalled. In style, completely unaffected by contemporary taste and judgment, he set himself laboriously to achieve his own individual pattern of perfection, a pattern from which he never swerved, of which he never fell short. He expected neither praise nor recognition from his own generation, and certainly never entertained the thought of material gain, he conceived himself as labouring solely for the glory of God. Then in the hey-day of his career, he tossed aside his appointed life's work, and humbled his genius to the service of a political cause. For the sake of the national struggle he surrendered his eyesight; and at the Restoration, he faced unflinching the grim consequences of his loyalty and sacrifice—a blind old age of poverty, loneliness and unpopularity; and in that old age, in that condition he produced "Paradise Lost," "Paradise Regained," and "Samson Agonistes." Into these works he was able to put, to a degree that was rarely been granted to man, his whole consummate self, his own life, his own soul, his own militant and victorious experience, his own triple-tested and impregnable faith. I know of no words in English fit to describe such a life and such an achievement, except perhaps the words of the greatest of Englishman:

> He was a man; take him for all in all,
> We shall not look upon his like again.

Hyderabad. G. E. LONG.

THE POETRY REVIEW grows from strength to strength. There can be very few papers in existence so eager to discuss new tendencies in writing: ALAN ROOK.

WENDLEHATCH

THERE stands a house in Wendlehatch,
With lattice windows 'neath the thatch,
Where swallows lurk in June and bring
Those warmer days when linnets sing.
The village lies against the sea,
Near granite cliffs. Atlantic gales
In winter rage incessantly—
And longshoremen tell fearful tales
Of homing ships with tattered sails,
Eager to gain a soothing rest
Within the cove towards the west.

But when the golden summer comes,
And every cottage garden hums
With bees, then Wendlehatch supplies
An early glimpse of Paradise—
Sweet flowers adorn the gardens there,
In evidence of rustic care.
Yet from the common one may see,
Beyond a lane that straggles by,
That empty house, beside a tree
Now withering. Athwart the sky
Gaunt branches reach out, stiff and bare,
Storm-blasted, 'midst sun-flooded air;
That lonely cottage lends a patch
Of tragedy to Wendlehatch!
And ancient people of the village
At eventime, when after tillage
Old tales are told of long ago,
Relate the story and the woe
That once unfolded—'neath the thatch
Of that queer house in Wendlehatch.

Yet none remembers now the man
Who, in that house, fulfilled his span
Of living; so the story grows
As bud unfolds into the rose—
Each year a newer chapter added,
And incident with detail padded,
About the house with broken thatch
That lends a lure to Wendlehatch.

ARTHUR LYNNFORD-SMITH.

TIME OF CHERRIES

NOW is the time of cherries,
When piled on booths and barrows,
The fruit lies bright as water
And dark as if with rain.
Over beyond the houses
Fields are shaggy with barley,
Woods are dark with the sun
That drifts like dust between branches.

Now is the time of cherries,
When over the bright water
Destruction spreads again,
Like smoke over bright meadows.
Yet fruit is not ash on the tongue,
And laughter is not hollow,
And as in happier summers
The rose is white on the spray.

And over the greying swathe
The brittle petals blow.
Yet now, in this time of cherries
A shadow is in the heart,
As frost before the winter
Has bruised the fragile petal,
And behind the cherry's sweetness
The bitterness of blood.

MARGARET STANLEY WRENCH.

MOST SLOW DEATH

MOST slow Death softly calls to those who wait,
It knocks on hearts as birds beat at a gate,
Most swift it wakens those who do not fear,
How pure the frozen hush when life is clear.
Most fair is death beyond, I long to die
To see the shadows of that other sky,
Yet fear the pain—a coward—yet how sweet
To hear no longer worried, selfish feet—
Oblivious rest, with kindness Hell appease :
Most calm the disregard of tortured pain
When Man without desire is great again,
Most great the end, when, flung against the breeze
Swift tear and burn, at last the soul is freed
To die for others that is death indeed.

H. O. MARSHALL.

ANOTHER SURVEY BY PETER BAKER

THE public wants to write and to read poetry. A short time ago publishers and booksellers would have disputed this. To-day, I think few would. They were disputing it when I last wrote a survey of the new poetry in THE POETRY REVIEW, but I maintained that a New Age was on the way and that the poets would be the first to light the fires of truth, goodness and beauty for mankind. Let us compare the position to-day with where we stood then.

The daily press was then crying "Where are the war poets ?" ; the poets I mentioned in my articles were mostly unpublished and unknown ; the publishers, printing only the lesser poetry of ten years ago, wailed that it would not sell—and, to give them their due, they had some very expensive experience to guide them ; no fewer than eleven poetry magazines, or literary periodicals that were sympathetic to modern poets, had ceased publication ; this list could go on indefinitely, ending, perhaps, with one of the most promising young poets throwing himself off Waterloo Bridge and being mercifully saved by the *Daily Sketch* rescue service. However, I hope I have made my point.

What has happened since seems almost a miracle to some. Anthologies of the younger poets began to appear : *Poems from the Forces, Poems of this War, More Poems from the Forces,* the less satisfying *Poetry In War-Time,* and so on. They are still appearing and some more are on the way. Henry Treece, I believe, is preparing an R.A.F. anthology, and there is even one devoted to the N.F.S. More literary and poetry periodicals have appeared. Most of the poets I named in my articles and many more writers of the new poetry have since appeared in books, pamphlets or broadsheets of their own. Finally, a short time ago, Colin Strang appealed for poems by unknown writers. His letter appeared in several periodicals and papers. So far 26,600 writers have sent him manuscripts.

Perhaps I may now write my articles without having first to prove to the public, booksellers and publishers that they all want to read, write and sell poetry ?

The first point I want to make is that the new poetry now rising from this war is entirely democratic, as all true poetry should be. The line between poetry and verse is emotive. Therefore, the more classical type of poetry which is less emotional and symbolical than romantic poetry can be undemocratic. The romantic poet is, essentially, a democrat. I do not mean that he will be a member of the Labour Party, the Social Credit Party, the I.L.P., the Communist Party or the Anarchists' Union. But he must essentially be a free thinker in the true sense of that often misued word. And his reason must not rule his emotions.

Man's finest achievements are reached by a complete union of intellect and emotion by reason and imagination. Poetry must be the cumulus in

clothes recognisable by reason of the deepest feelings of man. The reason the people want poetry is that because in it they find the only expression of their deeper and hitherto unexpressed feelings. In prose, words mean what they say. In poetry they carry with their rational meaning a vast imaginative structure of symbolic association. In poetry is embodied mankind's struggle from animalism to deity.

What, then, is the future of poetry? Not in Royal Academies of Poetry or the affixation of Royalty to The Poetry Society. As I said before, poetry is democratic. It must be free. A golden age of artistic achievement needs no such trapping; an age bare of poets wants no postmortem of poetry's death.

No, the poet is speaking now, of and for the people. In the Welsh, the people are to poetry born. The English were once. I do not think their appreciation has died. The poets now writing are enriching their already rich treasure.

The ballad, the love poem and religious poetry will re-emerge. Laurence Whistler, Francis Gelder, Henry Treece and others are now known as ballad-writers; Nicholas Moore and others too numerous to mention have returned to love poetry, simple and sensuous; Leslie Norris and Norman Nicholson are two names whom I would associate with any mention of religious poetry.

Many people would say that this return to simple, sensuous poetry means a regression to Georgianism. But I strongly oppose any such view. Whatever the independent merit of the interwar poets, their experiments in form, tone, cadence, imagery and symbolic evocation has left us immeasurably better equipped in our workshop, although the materials for our working remain the same. Moreover, the general awareness of events, and the communal conscience that exists to-day gives the poet, as others, a sense of activity and realism that will keep him away from the shadowy gardens of illusion in which the Georgians longed to linger. This realism, coupled with intense imagination and a burning faith, should produce romantic poetry of a new magnificence.

Who knows but that we may be coming upon a greater Elizabethan age, when England will once again be a land of love and laughter, songs and poetry? Only the poets can make it so, and to do it, they must not only speak with golden tongue, but must become, in fulfilment of the thought of one of their number, the legislators of this age.

PETER BAKER, b. 1921, is an Officer in the Royal Artillery. Poet and critic, General Editor, Resurgam Books (The Resurgam Younger Poets Broadsheets and Booklets, The Resurgam Library, etc., published by the Favil Press), and collaborated in other topical anthologies.

THE POETRY OF EDITH SITWELL

THE influence of woman poets on poetry has generally been negligible. They wrote, and when they wrote it was in an individualistic and narrow sphere, often very beautiful and inspired, but lacking entirely the quality present in the work of the men—that pollination, it might almost be called—which fertilizes by its influence the work of the younger poets. It is therefore all the more remarkable to observe how far-reaching in effect has been the influence of the work of Edith Sitwell (*Poems New and Old,* Faber, 2s. 6d.).

Coming in the disillusioned years, the rag-time 'twenties, when poets were divided into two camps—those who strove frantically to resurrect in heavily rural style the peace and security of pre-war England, and those—T. S. Eliot and Siegfried Sassoon led the way—who saw life as a chaotic and sterile muddle, the poetry of Edith Sitwell, startled by its originality, shocking the critics, who could make little of verse in which originality of metre was only equalled by strangeness of metaphor.

It was these metaphors and similes, the "shrill green breeze," "blue glass beads of the frost," "pig-snouted small winds," which did more than anything to alienate the poetry-reading public, who, in spite of strong efforts by Miss Sitwell and her two brothers—poetry readings, the poet concerned reciting from behind a black velvet curtain, the editing of a revolutionary verse magazine—did not for some time appreciate the work of this highly-talented writer.

But, as with most things new and strange—providing they are good—time has taken away the strangeness, leaving what was perhaps not perceived while the exotic newness of the verse was the first thing to engage the attention, I mean the essential poetry of the work, for even while Miss Sitwell writes of country nymphs in black velvet bonnets, and snouted satyre, drinking clotted cream, there is underlying the subtle brilliance of the lines, something deeper, giving a kind of counterpointed meaning, "Clown's Houses" and "Proserpine," which begins, "Hell's flames seem flowering rows of beams," are two poems which reveal this effect most strongly. They have a surrealist quality that seems to have influenced to some extent the work of Dylan Thomas, the strange, unrelated imagery, knit into a revelant whole; the cabalistic touches, the juxtaposition of the symbols of death and corruption with those of full blossom, giving a "skull filled with roses" effect. While her penchant for the unusual has given as such poems as "The Hambone and the Heart," "The Lament of Edward Blastock," "The Bat," and "that lovely little poem, 'The Musicians'," it has sometimes led her to extravagant lines such as "The stars were like prunes." Another trait that some find irritating is the constantly reoccurring themes and images, the repeated references to fruit, the use of the word "gold," "green," "honey,"

"cream." A number of the poems do in fact appear to repeat themselves, the fairy's song from the "Sleeping Beauty" which begins "The purring fire has a bear's dull fur," is developed later in the book in "Dark Song." Another instance occurs when the lines from the "Sleeping Beauty," "I hunted with the country gentlemen, who, seeing psyche fly thought her a hen," appears in slightly altered form in "Kitchen Song"; personally, I think that as in music, a repetition of motif consolidates the work into a whole, and that the creations of an artist should stand as one body, not as several unrelated entities.

If Miss Sitwell's poetry, taken as a whole, has one outstanding fault, it is that of aloofness, of being too much apart from life, and breathing rather the rarefied atmosphere of the "ivory tower." Predominant is the nostalgia for a far-off childhood:

> But Dagobert and Peregrine and I
> Were children then; we walked like shy gazelles
> Among the music of the flower-bells.
> And life still held some promise—never ask
> Of what—but life seemed less a stranger then,
> Than ever after in this cold existence.
> I always was a little outside life—
> And so the things we touch could comfort me;
> I loved the shy dreams we could hear and see
> For I was like one dead, like a small ghost,
> A little cold air wandering and lost.

Like the lady in "Colonel Fantock," Miss Sitwell seems a "little outside life," filling her poetry with beautiful sensuous imagery that one could almost touch. In the later poems, "Street Songs," this delight in colour, light and texture of things is less apparent. The war has produced varying effects on the work of poets. In Miss Sitwell's case this has shown itself in a wider and deeper appreciation of the problems of humanity. "Still Falls the Rain," has a sombre and terrible beauty, enhanced by the alternation of short and very long lines. In "Any Man To Any Woman," the vivid awareness of death mingling with human tenderness produces such lines as "Then die with me and be my love." Indeed, death and the symbol of the bone, the Potter's Field and the worm are predominant, although Miss Sitwell reminds us in such poems as "The Swans" and "The Weeping Rose," that her witchery in invoking exquisitely delicate phantasy is as potent as ever.

One is tempted to wonder, on observing the effect of present-day events on her work, what would have been the outcome of a closer contact with the harsher realities of life, if in early youth, Miss Sitwell had forsaken the ivory tower and plunged into the struggling every-day world. Would there have been a widening of scope, a strengthening and

new awareness of life? Or would her talent, like a brilliant exotic flower that is planted out too soon, have been stunted and maimed? The answer is uncertain: we can but be thankful that the flower has thriven, gaining in strength and scattering unnumbered seeds not only in the realms of poetry but also in literature and the English ballet.

ELLODE COLLINS.

CLOISTER AT NOONTIDE

HE sits in the quiet cell
Where a shaft of sunlight
Strikes the grey wall softly,
Transmuting the dull stone
Into honey in the honeycomb,
Bringing curious memories
Of the murmuring
Of bees in the orchard
Where a boy lay dreaming
At noontide in the long grass,
Who knew for an instant,
One fragment of the shattered
Chalice that is Time,
The Oneness with the Moment,
The Union with the Green Grass,
The Silent Apple Tree above him,
Not knowing that his kingdom
Was his but for the Moment
Although at length Eternal.

From the cloister garth echoes
A blackbird's hautboy piping
From the foaming wild cherry
By Abbot Gervase' tomb,
Bringing thoughts of a scholar
On a morning in April
Riding through the forest,
Down from Oxford with the world's
Pomegranate his for plucking,
The Seven Seas his for the sailing,
Never recking of the harsh rind
So bitter to the palate,

Or the dun shore so barren
In the bleak light of morning.

Through the narrow embrasure
With its cold bars of iron,
Borne on the west wind
From the Abbot's walled garden,
Glides the elusive
Scent of the jessamine,
With its agonising whisper
Of a girl's voice singing
By the river at moonrise ;
Of a woman's brittle laughter,
And a trampled white flower
Crushed beneath a silver heel ;
Of broken petals drifting
On pale water in the moonlight.

He stretches forth his hand
From the enveloping habit,
And gently touches the smooth wall,
Warm now in the sunshaft,
That till so lately was cold to his fingers,
But swiftly he enfolds these
Again below his habit,
For the warm stone recalls
A smooth cheek beneath his fingers,
So soon to be frozen
In an ivory stillness,
And swiftly transformed
Into one of Death's checkers
Waiting upon his inscrutable chessboard.

As the bell from the Abbey
Calls to Nones he rises quietly,
Without a glance behind him
Unshaken he stands there
Framed in the grey doorway,
For these things are now beneath him,
Although of his being
A part now forever :
Since one Easter morning

When the Sacring Bell sounded
In the Chapel in the Forest,
Beside the Hidden River
That flows to the Lost Shore;
Where the birds sing the Mass,
And the blossoms offer incense;
Forgotten of the scholars,
The poets and the lovers;
Since he took up the challenge
The Eternal cast before him,
And knew once and forever
The irrevocable answer,
The Union with All Things,
The Oneness with the Moment.

DORIS MAJOR.

* "THERE IS NO DEPTH IN THIS DAVIES"

IF he be dead, it is as though
A robin died beneath the snow,
Tucked away neatly, whose bright eyes
Once stared with impudent surprise
At every tit-bit flung to him.

As though a leaf in Autumn dropt,
A singing stream by Winter stopt,
A rainbow faded from the skies,
A gardenful of memories
Has passed with him to limbo-land.

He was the gallant of all tramps,
The happy fool 'mid wrecks and scamps,
Until he came unto his own
Fair garden: Now the bird has flown,
The singing bird that nested there.

Quietly Nature covers over
The dying bird and the dead rover.
Now every Summer we must bear
To live without his whistled âir,
For he lies underneath the Spring.

* The poet's whimsical criticism of himself.

DULCIE EDEN GREVILLE.

THE POET

WORDS cannot mirror
The thoughts which hover
On the twilight border
Of the undefined,

Cannot capture
The vast abstractions
Which move
Portentous and invisible
Above the eternal meadows
Of the mind,

Cannot grasp
The delicate intuitions
Which slip through the fingers
Like dissolving shadows.

But always the poet must be straining
To give a shape, a colour,
Pattern, meaning,
To the reality half-comprehended,
Guessed but not known.

W. R. LATHAM.

THE WOMAN I MADE IN JUNE

AFTER the green and gallant grasses of June,
After their yellow dangling stamens have withered away,
And the white plumes of their stigmas
And the green glumes are gone,
Still there remain the stalks, yellow and dry,
Still there remain the seeds, wrapped in the soil,
For the soil is a foam of living, and there they lie.
Would that the woman I made in June were so!
I made her out of the grasses, straight and slender as they,
Delicate mind of my mind, able to see as I
The green World, gleaming, glimmering, poised between Sun and stars,
Rolling its misty curtains to and fro as it turns,
Hiding its hollow thunders, reverberations and groans
In the hush of the grass growing, and the leaves drinking the sun.
She that was made of the grasses like them is withered and gone,
She is even less than the grasses, for seed from her there is none,
Though my living soul enclose her, there is no germ to grow;
Delicate mind of my mind, gallant and gay,
She is a wisp of dried grasses, a handful of hay.

GEOFFREY DOBBS.

SEARCH

IN search of God, I fail to find
A pathway through the maze,
Or is it that my eyes are blind
With earthly stage ablaze ?
Here changing scenes of pure delight,
Enthrallingly displayed,
Ravish my sight and me requite
With loveliness, portrayed.

In search of Him when ebon night
Assails the avenue,
In dark pursuit of winged flight
Of Sun-God's retinue :
I in the search negation know,
Though my hands pluck the stars ;
Are these God's eyes, through domino ?
Or lamps of His bazaars ?

The story in the Book of Time
Tells of the Gods pursued,
By life emergent from the slime
In rampant certitude.
These many Gods to me confuse
The Sacred Pedigree,
Before their Altars I refuse
To bow—or bend the knee !

Though I can vision life in rhyme
And sing the Golden Age,
The view is mine, of present time ;
God is beyond my gauge.
I learn that spinning systems vast
Their ordered sequence keep ;
Dark is the shadow which they cast
On me, who only creep !

The Universal loom weaves out
A tapestry ornate,
And threads of weft combine throughout
In patterns, crossed or straight.
The shuttle lays the weft in strand
Between the warp of Fate ;
But who has seen the Weaver's hand
The shuttle consecrate ?

O who that come from earthly womb
In reason now can cloak
A triumph over earthly tomb
That from Death's sleep awoke,
The Man of Galilee, who taught
The Brotherhood of Man ?
A superstition, overwrought ;
Reversal of the Plan.

Not Christ, resurgent from the tomb
At credulous demand,
Did weave upon religion's loom
The dogmas, strand by strand.
Not Fellowship with Holy Ghost ;
Not Son in Triple God :
MAN set his foot on uttermost
High pinnacle untrod !

HARRY SEFTON.

I STAND ALONE

A THOUSAND miles away the soldiers perish.
Full hearts are breaking in each captive land,
Seeking a solace for the sores they cherish,
Seeking a Maker who can understand.

They are united in their common grieving,
They can claim kinship, friend with mourning foe ;
I stand alone, my losses unrevealing,
I cannot claim companionship in woe.

I stand alone in uncompanioned sorrow,
Alone without a mourner at my hand,
Spending the hours from morn to sunless morrow,
Waiting the comfort of the Last Command.

Staff Captain. R. E. K. THESIGER.

DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY: XCVII

One turns with eager interest to any publication signed by Edna St. Vincent Millay, whose distinguished volumes of poetry I have reviewed for THE POETRY REVIEW. The heart of the world has been absorbed and deeply hurt by the tragedy of Lidice, the unfortunate town which was destroyed by German fury.

As stated by the Writers' War Board in the Foreword to Miss Millay's poem, *The Murder of Lidice* (Harper Bros.):

> "On June 10th the German Government proudly and formally announced to the world that its picked murderers had razed the tiny village of Lidice, Czechoslovakia, to the ground; destroyed every structure, including the ancient Church of St. Margaret's; killed every man (including the priest) and fifty-two women; driven the surviving women off to 'concentration camps'; and herded the children into 'educational institutions.' Lidice, they proclaimed, was now forever erased from the map and the memory of the world. This indeed they did because of an unproved suspicion that the village had transiently harboured the executioners of the Hangman, Heydrich."

The poem is thirty-two pages long, in pamphlet form. The opening stanza follows:

Ye martyred peoples of this maddened planet,
This Earth, which like a moth about the sun
To-day does whirl, as if it would itself
Its own destruction wreak, seeking to fall
In flame from out its orbit, and between
Its sister worlds be seen no more at all:
Human disaster on so vast a scale
The mind can not conceive;
Country by country, town by town,
Village by village, the hurt mind reads down the painful page
In search of symbols—symbols of the proud, the fearless
Resistance of free men to the tyrannic rage,
The ruthless act, the edict too inhuman, almost, to believe.

Unflinching Freedom, sane and tearless:
Let now your never to be numbered fact-by-fact prodigious glories
Shine forth in one fierce light against this guilty age . . .
And guide our groping children, born in darkness; be their bright
And hopeful heritage.

In the intervening stanzas Miss Millay helps to make the world never forget the outrage of Lidice and concludes with the following poignant appeal to America:

Careless America, crooning a tune;
Catch him! Catch him and stop him soon!
Never let him come here!
Think a moment: are *we* immune?
Oh, my country, so foolish and dear.
Careless America, crooning a tune,
Please think! are *we* immune?
Catch him! Catch him and stop him soon!
Never let him come here!
Ask yourself, honestly: what have we done?
Who, after all, are we?
That we should sit at peace in the sun,
The only country, the only one
Unmolested and free?

Catch him ! Catch him ! Do not wait !
Or will you wait, and share the fate
Of the village of Lidice ?
Or will you wait, and let him destroy
The village of Lide, Illinois ?
Oh, catch him ! Catch him, and stop him soon !
Never let him come here !

Cecille Zenia Lewis is known to THE POETRY REVIEW through her first book, *Facing East*. She comes to us now with an enlarged vision and vocabulary in *Tenets, Truths and Lyrics* (Bruce Humphries, Boston), in which we find a group of sonnets marking her as an accomplished writer of that most difficult form. She writes of Bach and Wagner and Judas and Moloch. Let us read "Bach" :

O solemn Bach, the son of singing Bachs
Who sang from age to age in growing thirst
Of beauty flowing from a miller's heart ;
Oh, welling quiet that within would burst
Like organs past cathedral walls, or love
That knows no earth and worlds rends apart ;
'Tis thus Bach sought a truth beyond all truth,
A peace beyond all peace, a dream above
All dreams—in stirring dreams forever lost ;
And knowing hazes vanish on the sky,
Again he sought the haze at multi-cost.
O Bach, at once the answer and the quest,
At once the torrid earth and quiet sky—
Within his soul forever questioned WHY.

Miss Lewis' lyrics are written with ease and charm. We find much in "In the Crucible" :

In peace are riches, gold makes rich man poor ;
An impulse waivers, impetus is sure.
When aims are gone all purposes are vain ;
The seed of toil exceeds a toiler's grain.

In face of coin all witnesses are blind,
And all revenge a vengeance leaves behind ;
The wine of hatred is the dust of time ;
The fee for slander is a garb of grime.

Flint and Fireflies, by Ruth Thomas (Manthorne and Burack, Inc., Boston), includes some published in the *Writer's Forum*. Here is a poet who dearly loves England and expresses this love in the leading short poem :

England, I would give you
In exchange
My soft and easy bed
With comparative
Quiet overhead—
All my pork and eggs
And cheese
And my lazy after-dinner
Ease,
For your empty moors

And the grey golden quality
Embedded in your stones.
For your abiding durability
And, especially under stress,
Your steady casualness.

Another personal lyric is "More" :

Not yet enough
For us
The dole of life.
The exigence of passion,
Nor the immense peace
Crossed with tall spurs
Of storm.
Nor the long knives of beauty,
Nor fabric of a jest.

No compass to the alms
We ask—
We clamour for the infinite
And lust the boon of heaven.

Among pleasing new voices is that of Miss Rachel Albright, who registers having enjoyed many of Nature's phenomena. Musical the verses are in *Poems of the Middle West* (The Torch Press, Cedar Rapids), and we find an occasional sonnet, such as "Without Sanctuary" (England, 1940) :

No sound is heard within the wooded cote
Of doves ; small songs that once contrived to soar
With eagle strength are stilled forevermore—
The bayonet has reached the linnet's throat ;
The trembling birds are huddled underneath
A shattered hawthorn hedge ; a bomber is
A terror grim beyond analysis
To refugees behind a fallen leaf.

Is there no place within this world for birds
That sing ; no place of kindliness and love
For any little creatures—for soft words
To pass from tongue to tongue ? If not, what of
The future Aprils, each an eon long,
Without a flash of wings—a burst of song ?

A lyric entitled "Washington Irving Country" recalls vividly the American author who was much beloved both here and in England over a century ago. It follows :

The amber haze of autumn afternoons
Effaces time in Tarrytown ; it glimmers
Enchantedly on gray stone walls and simmers
Like witches' broth in long-gone harvest moons.

Slow-falling leaves (gay vagabonds) are sunning
Besides the trails Katrinka liked to follow :
Blonde braids are bobbing on to Sleepy Hollow
And once again a headless horseman's running.

By moss-grown headstones slowly toppling down
A linen cap is rustling; sunbeams twinkle
Like fairy eyes (O, where is Rip Van Winkle?)
And something flutters like a cambric gown.

The gentle ghost of Irving that has never
Departed from the land he loved is walking
Through purple-shadowed valleys fondly stalking
A storied past that will endure forever.

South Africa is very much in the minds of the world to-day and E. Vine Hall, of Capetown, is presenting *Poems of a South African* (J. C. Juta and Co., Capetown and Johannesburg). It has already passed into its tenth edition—"Dedicated with profound respect to all who are risking their lives for their country and the Freedom of Mankind."

These 230 pages tell us much about life in South Africa and also memories of England. It is an important contribution to the literature of the hour. There are very humane poems here—also are poems to fishermen, to visitors, to Dad's Birthday—and children. A serious English poem on the aeroplane places that instrument of war in its established recognized position of great importance. A line, following, suggests the scope of Mr. A. Vine Hall's vision. Through the aeroplane Mr. Vine Hall gives a striking picture:

"A map unfurled
Is the now slowly-turning world."

The author of *Out of the Blue* (Chapman and Grimes, Inc., Boston), Tatiana Boldyreff, by birth a Russian and by choice an American, was educated in pre-revolutionary Russia and is a graduate of Western Reserve University, Cleveland, U.S.A. Miss Boldyreff is the author of an autobiography of childhood in old Russia, a collection of poems entitled *Moss Fields* and a book on language psychology. From her lyrical vignettes we select "Russian Winter Motif":

Wolf eyes
Sinisterly,
Hungrily glow—live coals
On the moonlit silver brocade
Of snow.

and "The Heart of a Rose":

All stop to marvel, but who really knows
God's secret hidden in the heart of a rose?

In the brevity and picturesqueness Miss Boldyreff's poems suggest Chinese poetry.

The Empire state of Texas lays claim to many riches—and among them notably—a number of excellent poets. We find THE POETRY REVIEW considered Mrs. Crowell's writings some time ago as follows: "Grace Noll Crowell is a writer rich through her life experience and tells of it radiantly in her many books." Mrs. Crowell has received many honours and was appointed Poet Laureate of Texas by the State Senate in 1935.

Out of the fifty poems in her new volume *The Lyted Lamp* (Harper and Brothers, New York and London), perhaps one of the most musical and charming is the one we find at the close of the book, entitled "The Last Fair City":

I am a pilgrim and I am a stranger:
A transient in many a hostelry,
Biding a night-time through, and then departing
Upon the open road to Eternity.

Fair are the earthly cities, fair is the going.
But fairer far the turrets ahead that gleam
Through the quivering mists: the last fair city
Rising before me brighter than any dream.

Back of the crimson sunset lift the towers
Of ivory palaces that swim with light . . .
Lifelong I have striven to reach each destination
Before the sudden falling of the night.

Now yonder it lies. O Heart, with your restless yearning,
And tired feet that were forced so long to roam,
There lies the city, the one continuing city—
You are through with your constant seeking, you are home.

Elizabeth Coatsworth is a New England novelist who like many another novelist prefers the writing of poetry. In her second book, *Country Poems* (MacMillan Company, New York), she gives us a sheaf of country impressions gathered from all surroundings of her summer home in Maine. An accomplished writer she is well known and much loved. You will like "For a Lighting Flash":

There's nothing strong
Can hold Time's rein
And beauty pleads
To him in vain.

Through flowers and grass
His charger goes
At the same pace
He plods through snows.

But sometimes
For a lighning flash
Time seems to spare
His constant lash

And horse and rider
Immobile
Stand, while the earth
And heaven reel

In this hour of dire confusion and death we do not find much time to steal down a country road, but opening this volume—this opportunity presents itself.

In 1905 David Cornel De Jong was born in Friesland, Netherlands, and arrived at the age of thirteen with his family in America, and settled in Grand Rapids, Michigan. It is clear from his early start he was marked not only as a literary light but with the lyric genius. There are some five novels to his credit but *Across the Board* (Harper and Brothers, New York and London) is his first volume of poems. Some fifty Mr. De Jong has chosen from many more to represent him in the poetry world. Such magazines as *Poetry, The Nation, The Atlantic Monthly, Saturday Review*, etc. etc., know him well. The lines of the poems in this work do not bristle with the unexpected or extraordinary. They are clear, quiet, appreciations of the various scenes and

experiences Mr. De Jong cared to record. For example, the first two stanzas of "In Memoriam"

Here, where the grass is lusher than . . .
Here, where the winds bleach, and the sun . . .
Here lies my son . . . Over him silence
And noise go on as over anything once man
But now just bone. The days go on.

Ask me in whatever voice you may . . .
I know no answer, none was given me
When yearning meant food, when words paraded
With banners of truth, none when faith lay
At last on its utmost bed and ceased to be.

It would seem to this reviewer that Mr. De Jong has not entirely shaken off in his writings the influence of his mother tongue. His picture which the book carries is of a sensitive, alert and interesting man.

In *Mirror of the Heart,* a book of poems of Bayka Russell (Henry Harrison, Polygon Press, Brooklyn), the reader finds much to like. Miss Russell's sonnets are well done and clearly felt. Her lyrics are personal and engaging. This writer has appeared in the best of the newspaper columns and various poetry magazines, a gifted woman with ready perception in that which we would perpetuate. "Greater than Love" follows :

Greater than love ? Nay, has there ever been
A thing so great ? Would heaven itself seem fair
To Lancelot without his Guinevere ?
To Anthony, without old Egypt's queen ?
If young Leander had not ever seen
Hero, who would have known his name ? And where
Would Tristan be, without bright Iseult's rare
White beauty beckoning through moonlit sheen.

Since history began a love supreme
Has ruled the world and all the flower-starred
Fields of heaven, while each caressing breeze
Has told the listening heart a splendid dream
Of love. Great scholar as was Abelard,
Who thinks of him without young Heloise ?

Fragile Armor, a talented book by Frances Angevine Gray is presented by the Torch Press. Mrs. Gray has found publication in many of the poetry magazines, including THE POETRY REVIEW, to whom she is no stranger. We think very fine her poem "Legacy" :

How can I make you amends, my child,
In a time like this,
For bringing you into a world
Bound for the abyss ?

The cross sinks in the welter,
The lamp and the book shed no light,
The ancient certainties alter,
We march into night.

This recall for your solace,
When I leave you alone,
There is no new tribulation
The race has not known.

We have learned all of grief since the cave-men,
Yet hope perseveres.
Forever from hand to hand, courage
Is a torch down the years.

Through these pages we find the quick acceptance of the beautiful and the refusal of all things unlovely. ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

POETRY'S SOCIAL FUNCTION

MR. T. S. ELIOT, addressing a crowded audience in Scottish-Czechoslovak House, Edinburgh, on "The Social Function of Poetry," said that poetry had to give pleasure. The poetry which never had given any pleasure to anybody never had, and could never have, any social function at all. That statement immediately raised the question of whether a poem could be said to have a greater social function than another poem because it gave pleasure to more people. If we said "Yes" too quickly, we very soon got into trouble. Were we not likely to say that a poet who had never been read by many people at one time, but still, after many hundred years, went on giving pleasure to a few people showed a kind of permanence ? We had, however, to take into account the quality of the readers before deciding the importance of a poet merely by the number of readers enjoying him.

A poem must go on pleasing some people in every generation or be capable of giving fresh pleasure after a period of oblivion or neglect so long as the language it was written in was understood. He thought it was, nevertheless, proved that the greatest poets had given great pleasure to a great number and variety of people at the same time and successively.

If it were only pleasure the poet had to give us, it would mean that the pleasure would not be of a high quality. So beyond any specific intention poetry might have, he thought that in poetry we always expected the communication of some new experience or fresh understanding of the familiar or the expression of something we had experienced and never found words for, and all that enlarged our consciousness or revived our sensibility. At the same time, we might overlook what poetry did for us collectively as a society. It was important that every people should have its own poetry, not simply for the benefit of people who enjoyed poetry, since the existence of poetry in a language made a difference to the society as a whole, and also to the people who did not enjoy poetry and never read it, even to those who did not know the names of their great poets. That was what he meant by "the social function of poetry."

When a civilisation was really healthy, a great poet would have something to say to his fellow-countrymen at every level of education. But we might say that the duty of the poet, as poet, was only indirectly to his people ; his direct duty was to his language—first, to preserve it ; secondly, to explain and improve it. Without great poetry language and culture would deteriorate, and might be absorbed by a more powerful culture. If we had no living literature we should also become more alienated from the literature of the past.

Remarking that he is receiving very many poems from soldiers, Mr. Eliot said it would be a mistake to think that there are several hundred good poets about. It was his opinion that many people who try to write poetry are sensitive souls who feel the

need of relief by recording their impressions.

Replying to a question which implied that too many people did not realise the difference between rhymes, doggerel, and genuine poetry, Mr. Eliot said, "I think some people write poetry because they don't know how to read poetry, and if they knew how to read poetry better they would not attempt to write it."

THE FAITH OF A POET

"The Faith of a Poet" was the subject of an address by Lady Margaret Sackville, first President of The Poetry Society, at a meeting of the recently-formed Cheltenham Religious Drama Society. Faith and poetry, she said, were great, though often misused, words, each implying and including the other. Both argued the existence of an unchartered, mysterious region beyond the scope of our immediate senses.

Poetry was not merely a matter of words, just as faith was not simply going to Church: as everything in life overlapped and overflowed and one mystery helped to elucidate and explain another. The men who built the cathedrals included more in their conception of religion than we did, and humour was not excluded, as the gargoyles proved. Humour was an aspect of divinity, but men lost this cheerful faith and brave humility, and the churches of the late Renaissance were built by men rather for the purpose of showing off their own skill than from any impulse to worship.

Faith, poetry, science, and art all lost some vital quality when those who practiced them attempted to plough a lonely furrow and deny their essential indivisibility. That was why the particular jargon of "art for art's sake" was so thin and futile. Chesterton punctured this irritating phrase by describing how the cry was first "Art for man's sake," then "Art for art's sake," and lastly, "No art for God's sake"—an epigram which put the whole matter in a nutshell.

Poetry, concluded Lady Sackville, must have feet as well as wings. The true mystic was always practical, and knew the mystery which lay in common things.

I am interested to read that the poem beginning "No One Can Go the Way I Go," which appeared in Nov.-Dec., 1942, erroneously as by Lieut. William Pose, of H.M.S. *Cossack*, is really by Dr. Marie Stopes. This poem impressed me deeply and in my humble opinion it stands out from all those published by you in 1942. How exquisitely the poet records the discovery we ultimately make of our essential alone-ness, but—*Per Ardua ad Astra*! Indeed, it lifts up the heart and re-affirms magnificently the Society's motto: "Where there is no vision the people perish."

American Red Cross Club. MARY SEYMOUR VAN OOSTVEEN.

Mr. A. E. Lowy, of the Favil Press, writes in THE POETRY REVIEW on "Poetry Doesn't Sell." Mr. Lowy's business in life leads him, very naturally, to discuss the business side of the oldest of the arts. I could not expect him to share my view that art's crying need is permanent separation from the merchant and all his works. Professionalism spoils every good thing. We should be considering, not "does it sell?" but does it tell?—does it move us, does it change our feelings and our thoughts? A powerful emotion or a new thought comes to me; I don't consider whether I can sell it but whether I can shape it well and "get it over." I aim at expressing the feeling or the thought, with an artist's economy of utterance. I want the words to come to life and (as Kipling said) "walk up and down in men's hearts." If I can get repaid in some way for my pains so much the better for me, but the market really has nothing to do with value.—Aidan Clarke in *Richmond Times*.

ROMANTICS AND OTHERS

It is perhaps rather premature to pass judgment upon the new romantic revival in poetry which has emanated from the post-Auden poets. Perhaps, also, it is too early to trace the source of their inspiration ; many of these younger poets are as yet unknown and unpublished. Because of this the grouping of modern poets is difficult, which I consider fortunate, having a dislike for the shackling tenets and bounds of movements and schools.

Ignoring for the present the Apocalyptic poets, one fact emerges clearly. Many of the outstanding poets of to-day are of Celtic origin, Welshmen predominating. The best known are Dylan Thomas and Henry Treece, of whom Francis Scarfe wrote in *Auden and after* : "Thomas and Treece . . . both Welshmen, admirers of Hopkins and Joyce, readers of the Bible and ballads, and having the Welsh gift of the gab." Besides these two there are Vernon Watkins, Keidrych Rhys, Alun Lewis and Idris Davies, all of them Welsh poets with their roots grown well into their land.

In *The Last Inspection* (Allen and Unwin), Alun Lewis has turned from poetry to the short story. Why does a poet, a writer who has already chosen his medium, turn to the new medium of prose for expression and what relation has it to his poetry ? Stephen Spender's *Burning Cactus*, although in thought and expression inferior to his poetry, stood in some relation to his other work. Alun Lewis's stories appear to be the fruit of a separate development of his thought. His soldier stories are realistic and brutally true to army life, so true that they have a pointed value for those who, like myself, are too familiar with his types and all the stupidity and frustration of life as we know it now. This close observation of individuals makes "The Wanderers" and "Dusty Hermitage" two of the best stories I have read for a long time. It will be interesting to watch the future of Alun Lewis as a story writer parallel with his development as a poet.

Pre-war political poetry followed a well-marked route to Munich *via* Germany, Austria and Spain, with occasional sallies into the tortuous by-ways of British foreign policy. Idris Davies' *Angry Summer* (Faber) is a collection of poems on the theme of the General Strike of 1926, that summer when Britain was poised on the edge of a workers' revolution. The depression hit the Welsh miners ; in Poem 27 Davies says of them :

> So out of the grime they came,
> Insulted and angry and proud,
> Together to march in the sun
> With a song and a curse and a vow,
> Together to challenge the creed
> That blood is baser than gold,
> Together to stand to the end,
> Together to live or die.

Davies' work is in the core of life ; the problems, social and personal, the political faith and discontent of the Welsh workers. In these poems lives a phase of British history whose effect is felt to-day almost as much as it was in 1926.

Seàn Jennett also has a Celtic background. *Always Adam* (Faber) shows he has absorbed much of the Irish legend and history which influenced Yeats so deeply. In his first poem he dedicates the collection to his mother and the Irish people. It is a key to his attitude and is worth quoting as such :

> To my mother
> and the dark-eyed, deep-hearted people of the Gaedhealtacht,
> the wild race of Donegal,
> the grey-eyed, black-headed people of Munster :
> the great and ancient Gaedheal
> who is filled with dream as a well is filled with water

held in a hard, ponderable reality
and bound with the iron of earth.

Although such poems as "The Marriage of Aoife and Strongbow" and "The Sons of Uisneach" are filled with the Irish dream, the iron of earth is there too. Poems like "Autumn, 1940" and "Christ's cross grows wings" and "For my love's sake" reveal Seàn Jennett as a poet of great promise, alive in his time.

Alan Rook's second volume of poems, *These are my Comrades* (Routledge), pulsates with life. In his introduction he says: "These poems represent a series of snapshots. They are, as it were, the jottings in an artist's notebook from which the great picture will one day be painted." I disagree with his choice of simile. A snapshot is a picture of life arrested, frozen into celluloid immobility for all time. These poems swell with life, buoyantly, with the intense concentration of a van Gogh painting rather than the bare statement of a photograph. I cannot quote from a collection of poems possessing such a uniformly high quality. Many are known to readers of THE POETRY REVIEW and I am certain that Alan Rook's feeling and expression will make a masterpiece of the picture he has promised us.

A Democrat's Chapbook, by A Quiet Woman (John Lane the Bodley Head), led me to expect verses such as those which jingle in the daily press. I read and was pleasantly surprised. There is good poetry here, feeling, perception, and (new to poetry of this war) a woman's outlook; a woman with an inquiring mind who wants to live in a new world and is ready to assist in its making. She asks:

. . . am I to live, as I have lived, in a condition that is faithless?
Am I to live in a world unable to take new gains?
Am I to live in a world with only the old tale repeated?
Unstable foundations for a stable thing?
Foundations used for other things: not this thing?

Events of the war are versified every day and one becomes wary in approaching any new effort. This quiet woman's effort is successful and no wariness is necessary. It is original and individual, worth reading now and returning to when the war has lost what glamour it possesses. I think the poems will retain all their freshness and direct appeal of sincerity.

Reading *Selected Poems,* of John Hall, Keith Douglas and Norman Nicholson (John Bale and Staples), brought to my mind some sound advice once given to me by Robert Graves. He said "I think a poem should only be written because one damned well has to write it." He went on to say that he despised the poet who plays to the public fancy and makes of poetry a gentlemanly art. Most undergraduate poetry smacks of gentlemanly artistry and is often guilty of lapsing into preciousity. It was very apparent in *Eight Oxford Poets,* in which I first became acquainted with the work of Keith Douglas. It is less apparent in his contribution to this new anthology, but it creeps into such poems as "Soissons, 1940" and "Pas de trois." I feel that "The Prisoner" and "Forgotten the Red Leaves" are indicative of Douglas's future style in which he will free himself from the repetition of such empty adjectives as "jewelled" and "magic."

John Hall's poetry also suffers from the over use of pet words. Although they may be effective in their original use they deteriorate with repetition, and besides damaging the poet's work, swell the ghostly ranks of poetic diction. For instance, when I read "Recital," I liked "the sharp fume of music" but the impression lost much of its pristine originality when I met it again in "Our bodies lay . . . lapped in the fume

and humour of the earth." Similarly "The wick of Wales" caught my mind, until I encountered "The wick of wisdom." Incidentally, John Hall shows symptoms of pyromania. His poetry abounds in fiery images and adjectives like "flame," "furnace," "blister," "smoke," "chimney" and so on. But his vocabulary does not detract from the genuine poetic ability which he possesses and as for his fire-dance—he has the company of Gorki.

Norman Nicholson treads another measure, a floral dance. When I reviewed his excellent anthology of religious verse I admired his depth of knowledge of the subject. Now I discover him to be a botanist-poet, who can incorporate flora in his verse as naturally and attractively as Herrick or Edward Thomas. Amongst these poems of Nicholson's I like most "The Holy Mountain" and "The Garden of the Innocent." He employs his knowledge of Jewish and Christian legends direct, unlike Dylan Thomas and his followers who use them as symbols. Perhaps Norman Nicholson will turn more to the style of these two long poems and "Before I was born" and "Corregidor" and away from his "God's in his heaven" songs. He shows that he can do much better than this :

> The Lord God laughed
> At the wild fancies
> As He heard the birds
> Preach to St. Francis.

Leaving the younger generation of poets and writers we find a poet whose fame rests on his novels. Herman Melville, dead for fifty years, wrote much that is more of the present world than the work of some contemporary poets ; for example, "Immolated" and the fragments from "Clarel." As William Plomer says in his introduction to *Selected Poems of Herman Melville* (New Hogarth Library, Vol. X), "much of his verse is tedious ; or sprightly in a heavy way," and it suffers from the Victorian artificialities. It is in "John Marr" and several other sea poems that he is at his best. His poetry is sometimes remarkably modern, both in thought and presentation. For instance :

> Ay, Democracy
> Lops, lops ; but where's her planted bed ?
> The future, what is that to her
> Who vaunts she's no inheritor ?
> 'Tis in her mouth, not in her heart.

Herman Melville's work is an important addition to the New Hogarth Library.

Edward Shanks is a poet of an earlier generation than that to which I belong. That may be the reason why I find so little in *Night Watch for England and other Poems* (Macmillan), which conforms to my generation's conception of poetry. There are two exceptions ; "Meditation in the West" and "The Benefactors of Mankind." Like Idris Davies, he turns to recent history for his subject—the economic crises of 1931. In them he employs a very effective weapon which I can best describe as ironical commiseration. Amongst the other poems, which are light and occasional, these two stand out.

Beginning with a quotation from Boehme, ending with a poem by Clare, I can add nothing to Geoffrey Grigson's comprehensive introduction to *The Romantics* (Routledge) Neither would I add anything to this anthology which obviously has been carefully and shrewdly chosen. The editor has refrained from "resetting the crown jewels of Romanticism" which has prevented a mere regurgitation of over-familiar excerpts. But, remembering the modern trend towards romanticism and the new interest

accompanying it, their omission imparts a greater value to the selection.

ROLAND GANT.

Roland Gant is 22 years old and is at present a member of a Bomb Disposal Section. He contributes poetry, reviews, articles, and short stories to *Challenge, Tribune, Dorset Books, New Republic, Opus, Our Time, Poetry of To-day,* POETRY REVIEW, *Seven.* He has also written a novel, *To-morrow for the Young,* which he hopes to publish after the war.]

POETS AND PRETENDERS

Twentieth Century Psalter, by Richard Church (J. M. Dent, 5s.), is a Book Society Choice and is described as a poem sequence. There is much fine poetry, of the sort we have learned to expect from Mr. Church, in this book, but also a good deal of near prose in rhythmical lines, unrhymed, which from such a pen seemed an unnecessary concession to modernism. We are quite firm in our opinion that for us the book is valuable for those poems wherein the author has consciously striven to express his thought with more traditional grace and beauty. He is never ill at ease before the technical necessities of classical forms and we cannot see that he is any more expressive, while he may be less beautiful, in the freer atmosphere of the newer school. He has mastery in both and does not need to go halfway as it were to hit the coconut. There is, when all is said, more scope for Mr. Church's sensitive delicacy and restraint in the classical idiom. He is never obscure and does not need to be strident to gain a hearing. Please go on singing, Mr. Church, a truth well sung is half believed and has the power of a natural force.

But these are our views and perhaps a little aside from the task before us. We read this book with great pleasure ; was it really necessary to say we enjoyed some parts more than others ? The book contains a stern indictment of the times, palliated with a gentle philosophy which has all the charm of true poetry and will delight all lovers of fine thinking with its determined refusal to be bustled aside from man's proper duty, the encouragement of and delight in beauty.

Season and Festival, by Herbert Palmer (Faber, 2s. 6d.), is a more than usually welcome "Sesame" book—a collection of poems reprinted from previous publications. The selection has been very happily made from what must have been an *embarras de richesse* and the result is a volume as representative of his genius as one could wish. There is all the vigour of thought and diction, the catholic delight in all forms of beauty, the acute sensitiveness and sensibility which have always distinguished his work and we read this one-man anthology with great pleasure. Herbert Palmer's work always gives the same impression of a fine and vigorous spirit plucking gems of beauty forcibly from the amorphous quartz of life. His place in English literature is of course an assured one. He is modern in outlook with a mind still supple in its easy adjustment to the ever changing and ever accelerating scene. Yet in form he is a traditionalist with an immense technical and logical mastery of his art. He makes no attempt to satisfy our hunger for simple rhythm and cadence with tortured intricacies, nor does he seek to impress the gullible with obscurities in the hope that they will be taken for profundities. For him the deeps must be crystalline and reveal, and he shows in all his work an unfailing desire that we should share with him the fruits of his acute perception, so attuned to the beauty that lurks unseen; and which only awaits his "Open Sesame" to reveal itself.

Thirty-Three Poems, by Douglas Gibson (King, Littlewood and King, 15.), with a preface by Herbert Palmer, is a sincere and exquisitely written book which appeals by its technical excellence and lyrical quality more than for its depth of thought. Mr. Gibson has been content to sing, and sing he does most tunefully, but we think his mind was less concerned than his emotion, his thought than his feeling. We should not wish to appear to decry this book, however. The poems are most musical and full of tenderness and if they stop short of the deeps Mr. Gibson has found beauty enough to delay his plunge. This volume is a first publication and the author is a young man ; we share the opinion of the distinguished writer of the preface that it should not be long before the deeper realms give up their treasures to him.

The Royal Air Force has produced a great deal of verse during the present war, in this respect completely eclipsing the rival Services, which has had a certain popular appeal by reason, if for no other, of the poignant atmosphere in which so many of the authors are living. The smaller output of verse by the Army and Navy is no doubt due to their necessarily more restricted leisure, and to the lack of the conditions conducive to authorship in that leisure. *For Freedom*, by Squadron Leader G. L. Creed, R.C.A.F. (Dent, 3s. 6d.), is, so far as we are aware, the first volume of verse from the Canadian Air Force, and is, in our opinion, merely a product of that means and opportunity but, in the language of crime detection, without adequate motive. The verses are undistinguished by the element of poetry ; there is no individuality and the sentiment is banal. We observe that the book has gone into two editions. We are afraid we can congratulate only the Royal Canadian Air Force Benevolent Fund, which is to benefit by the royalties.

Operation by Night, by Flight-Lieut. George Eades (Hodder and Stoughton), is a poem in a traditional ballad form, whose title sufficiently describes its theme. "The Lays of Ancient Rome" might have been taken for a model and there is much of the marching rhythm of that great ballad sequence in this poem. There is also a gallantry of mental attitude, and a firm grasp upon simple reality in a rather grim and unreal world which we found very moving. The dramatic force of the poem was for us mainly in this rather than in the story which ends, as we greatly hoped, in a safe return and, no doubt, what would be a pre-war breakfast for us groundlings. All in all, this is an impressive piece of work and we wish its author luck and plenty of similar inspiration in a long future.

This Life, this Death, by T. R. Hodgson (Routledge, 5s.), is an interesting volume of modern verse by a young Flight-Lieut., who lost his life in May, 1941. This book is a fitting monument to his memory. Flight-Lieut. Hodgson had an arresting gift for phrase and a sense of rhythm which carries the reader effortlessly through his modernist impressionism. The diction is forceful and vibrant and there is evident sincerity and strength of conviction to compensate for a pessimism which has little concern with beauty save in the passionate intensity of his utterance. We missed the triumphant note which in a wiser world would, no doubt, have been his. He has seemed at times to disregard the reader's ignorance of his thought processes. There are lapses from the intelligible, but in spite of these occasional irritations the book is a moving experience to read which we can sincerely recommend.

Seagulls, by Christmas Humphreys (Favil Press, 4s. 6d.), is a return, after Flight-Lieut. Hodgson's book, to a less austere world where grace and ease are at the service of song in an existence obviously not devoid of beauty for the writer. In this Mr. Humphreys carries on his own tradition. There is the same but fresh delicacy of sentiment, the accustomed but new music and the usual but unusual skill in presentation which always delights us.

Beyond the Disregard, by John Pudney (John Lane, 2s. 6d.), is another welcome volume of poems from a serving officer in the R.A.F., who was, of course, well known to the literary public in happier times. The author's work is traditional in its adherence to the graces of rhythm and rhyme, but there is a bold impressionist technique which avoids the rounded period like a plague. The poems are chiselled to an ascetic parsimony of words and the chisel is struck firmly with a blunt instrument. The result is poetry quite free from nonsense or pretension. Mr. Pudney has something to say and says it with the terse elegance and unforced imagery which so distinguishes his work. His gift of compression demands concentration and, often, re-reading, but both are worth while.

From the Ashes, by Ashley Sampson (Williams and Norgate, 3s. 6d.), is the product of a contemplative mind and ripe reflection spread, we are told, over a period of some fifteen years. The poems are not ambitious and have the air of having been written for their author's spiritual profit and pleasure, and there are few better reasons for poetry. He has been concerned mainly to interpret his own mind in its reaction to life, but he is rarely topical. There is a quiet philosophical atmosphere, as of the study, in these uncomplicated and sincere poems where beauty can be relished without fret or haste.

London Garland, by W. Curran Reedy (Fortune Press, 5s.), is full of rhythmic music in a classical vein, unambitious for any soul-searching profundities, but with an excellent lyrical note. Mr. Reedy's world is carefree and sings in the bath when it is not dancing on the green or shall we say in Hyde Park. For the book, as its title suggests, is concerned mainly with London, its sights and sounds, and these, if portrayed in a manner reminiscent of more spacious days, are very competently described. The verse is invigorating and if we are not troubled by the necessity of fishing deep waters we are well entertained, if at times nostalgically, with lively vignettes of the life we used to know and love.

In Quest of the Beautiful, by Stanley J. Dover (John Wilson, 1s. 6d.), is an exercise in sonnet writing—one might almost say a five-finger exercise. If this sounds a little harsh we may plead that the author has appeared, as it were, before the curtain to receive our plaudits by decorating his volume with a portrait of himself. This suggests a complacence out of harmony with the quality of his work and invites, inevitably, more candid comment. There is a long, hard road to travel before Mr. Dover will write the kind of sonnet which will make his features relevant. In any case we believe it to be an essential virtue in a poet to be able to keep himself and his work apart. His good lines can only come to him from a mysterious source beyond and above him and when he is so inspired it will not be he that is writing. A poet can only hope to be a mouthpiece and be grateful for it.

It is our opinion that this volume does not succeed although the germ of success is possibly there. The sentiments and diction are trite and the sonnets are rather formless. This verse form should come like a jewel from a crucible, perfect, austere in shape and the product of fierce fires. Not many poets have achieved greatness with the sonnet, but we do not chide Mr. Dover for flying high. The discipline inherent in the needful practice of economy and tight control will be good for him.

Poems for the People, by Dorian Williams (Arthur H. Stockwell, 2s. 6d.), has a foreword by the author, which for unpretending modesty and good, sound sense is as exciting as his poems. He expresses the view that rhythm, clarity and rhyme are valuable for the sort of poetry the masses will read. Without indulging any views of our own about "modernism" we heartily agree with him, especially if these attributes

are used, as he uses them, to produce such lyrical pieces as "Truant Dreams," which begins with a real gallop to hounds on a hot scent, in rhymed couplets, perhaps a little envy-making in a book for the "People" since few of us ride anything more glorious than a push-bike, but we were glad to ride nostalgically with Mr. Williams, who has a gift for ballad and narrative verse. Let him not be too humble, it is a considerable art to write such things well. With his modesty unimpaired he will do even better in the days ahead.

Stalingrad, by Leo Spero (Press Contacts Ltd., 1s. 6d.), is a really moving poem of tragic but triumphant strength. It is all the stronger, too, for the absence of that violence of language which, with such a theme, would have been an irresistible temptation to so many of our contemporaries. Thank you, Mr. Spero!

Unique Poems, by Blanche Boverley (Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd.), is, unhappily, only unique in its title. It professes to contain, among other pieces, a "deeply interesting work" (we quote from the cover) called "What is Life?" We are afraid the authoress does not appear to know, or if she does she has certainly not communicated the answer to us in any manner, unique or otherwise. The book is of an elementary character, prone to sentimentality and without depth.

Poems, by Pauline M. Beazley (Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd., 4s.), is a volume of verse running to about 140 pages which can only be described as slight. The authoress, in a foreword consisting of a six-line poem in which the word "fields" appears intended to rhyme with "appeal," suggests that there is fragrance, hidden charm and a *spark divine* in her poems. These are large claims and unfortunately unfounded. We do not understand why this somewhat complacent introduction should be described by the publishers as modest. Is it perhaps the general view that these qualities in poetry are poor things? If so we still were unable to find the hidden charm, nor was our search lit by one flicker of the divine spark. The authoress must go much deeper for success. Ambition must go hand-in-hand with humble striving, with a strong emphasis on the humility. These verses are competent in the main but pedestrian and have no particular appeal. We think it helpful to add the comment that there are many faults in punctuation, which is much too important a matter for inaccuracy.

Squatter's Luck, by Ethel Anderson (Melbourne University Press, 5s.), is full of an antipodean gusto. We were somewhat daunted by the back-blocks patter in some of the pieces, and the geographical nomenclature of the sub-continent was a little trying to the eyes but there are good things in this volume. The poems are wide ranging and all are vigorous and emotionally satisfying. They will please all who like a fresh invigorating atmosphere and a thorough change of scene.

Poems of a London Warden, by Magdalen Girdlestone (The Covenant Publishing Co., Ltd., 2s. 6d.), contains some very good poems, but is not free from blemish. In the studies of nature and in many poems where her emotion has been touched by a simple and uncomplicated desire for expression she is at her best and her best is good. The air raid poems are not so successful and some of the sonnets suffer, as sonnets must, by being used for unsuitable subjects. There is certainly no place in their delicate atmosphere for political argument. Pieces like "R.A.F. (1939-1940)," "The Skylark" and "The Garden," to mention only three, are delightful.

Peasant Songs and Poems, by Ernest Roland Holford (Arthur H. Stockwell, Ltd.), is a pedestrian volume, monotonous in its level plodding. The author seems to be untroubled by inspiration and one searches in vain for depth of either feeling or experience. The rhyming is often forced and clumsy and a visible effort appears to have been expended upon mere versification. The labour, in our view, has not been repaid in the result.

All activities are not opportune in these concentrated days but Dr. John Lyth's experimental renderings in verse of the private reflections of Marcus Aurelius is a timely service. Fitzgerald, as Prof. Gilbert Murray, who blesses Dr. Lyth's efforts in an encouraging preface, points out, repudiated all belief in the doctrines of Omar; it was the poetry he cared for. But Dr. Lyth finds a far nobler and larger fragment of truth in Marcus, who valued above all else the freedom of mind for which we are now fighting. This new P.E.N. Book (Allen and Unwin) will be found to "give guidance and attain beauty" in the midst of a greater personal and international struggle than the good Stoic contemplated:

> The realms an Alexander may coerce—
> How small to those a Socrates perceives!
> The one a master of so many thieves—
> The other brooding on the Universe.
> Thy spirit thou thyself alone canst bind;
> Nor sword nor tyranny shall touch the mind.

A Poet's Notebook (Macmillan, 10s. 6d.) is a remarkable tribute to its compiler, Miss Edith Sitwell, who, in a brief preface to this collection of aphorisms on poetry by poets themselves, quotes Whitman, "that basely slandered man who was one of the greatest of all poets, that inspired and great soul who has been seen through the dirty eyes of little, mean and meagre souls," as saying "Whatever satisfies the soul is truth," adding "These truths satisfy mine." By the recognition, absorption and transmutation of them, Miss Sitwell has made herself notable and arresting as a poet and an interpreter of poetry. Poetastry shrinks before the illumination of these profound definitions of the qualities and necessities of poetry which justify the existence and exalt the significance of The Poetry Society and are too strong meat for its contemners. Miss Sitwell adds shrewd comments of her own, some especially applicable to modern poetry, as for example "It is this 'ultimate quality' in language (Whitman's, according to Wm. Rossetti), and 'speech above a mortal mouth', to quote from Ben Jonson's Discoveries, that is needed in the poetry of to-day." But let the reader and practitioner of poetry make full use of this wise exposition of form and substances, of beauties and technicalities, and strive to add to it on his own account, thereby removing much of the crudities and shaming the superficial lip service that marr present day appreciation (sic!) of poetry.

THE ADDITION TO "CHRISTABEL"

Regarding Ernest Hartley Coleridge's fine addition to "Christabel," and the query as to whether it is better fitted to form Part I or Part III of the original? Partly *both* seems to be the correct answer.

I submit that all of it (except the last verse) should precede (for it tells of events occurring prior to those in the original) and that the last verse should follow the original, for it deals with later matters than those in the original story. It states "I wed with fair Christabel," whereas, in the original, the love affair had progressed no further than Christabel's betrothal.

It seems that S.T.C. added Part II to his poem as an afterthought (Charles Lamb feared for the result, until he had read it) and that E. H. C. wrote his last verse in similar manner. As Ernest Hartley Coleridge has added to the interest of the original may I suggest to the gifted family they make a tradition of it, and that some present or future member will kindly add to E.H.C.'s last verse? He has left room there for such expansion and his concluding line pleads for it!

Hove, 3. HOWARD PARSONS.

TO THE EDITOR.

"THE POET AND THE NEW ERA"

Mr. H. L. Senior in his interesting and provocative article makes some general statements which he does not sufficiently justify. He does, however, say some true things, such as that the "beautiful and valiant youth of our time are dying on the stricken fields of selfishness."

I suppose this thought gives to his mind a pessimistic attitude, and Mr. Senior can be forgiven for inveigling the professional politicians, the cinema, jazz, big business, and so on. But I think the poet, if he is performing his true duties, is too happy in his own happiness to bother his head about these things.

I do not want the poet to desert his office, which is the creation of beauty, in order to make a more definite contribution to political thought. I have always understood that Milton would have been better occupied by his poetry, than in his unfortunate incursion into the politcs of his time.

From my study of the great English poets, I have gathered that though they have passed through the valley of shadows they have struggled on high again to the glorious mountain tops. The prevailing note of our English poetry is optimism, though they had their times of depression. I implore Mr. Senior then to modify his judgments of his fellows. I do not think in this article he is seeing life steadily and seeing it whole.

The older I grow the more I am convinced that it is wrong to make generalisations, such as: the aesthetic taste has never been so low as it is at present. The common people of this country are not expected to know *Lycidas* or *Paradise Lost*. Why should they be condemned on their ignorance of one great poem? Even though they have never heard of the *Canterbury Tales*, the *Faerie Queene*, *The Tempest*, *Adonais*, the *Ode to the Nightingale*, the *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*, or the *Ancient Mariner*, I would not say their taste was low. There are many hundreds of *good poems*, old and new, that I would not press the claim of any one poem or one poet. Some can pray better out in the fields than in an old cathedral; some get more good from a plain, unadorned service than from the ritual and ceremonies of High Church. When a man loves a poem so that it becomes part of his life, that is the poem for him.

That poetry is unpopular everyone knows, and why? The schools and schoolmasters have a lot to answer for. When I was a lad, a poem like Tennyson's "Brook" had to be taken week in, week out and conned by rote, word by word, line by line, so that it could be recited to the Head Teacher or H.M.I. with expression and knowledge of all the meanings. Some despicable little prig who was quick by reason of a good verbal memory was stood on a chair, and smirking in his superior way, was highly commended for showing up his more unfortunate class-mates, who were too nervous to render a good account of themselves. Not so many years ago an Elementary Schoolmaster's actual livelihood depended upon whether his children could do this sort of thing to the satisfaction of the Board of Education Inspector, and very unpleasant these gentlemen could be. Even at the present time, there is too much cramming of poetry, and insincere and dishonest appreciation of poets and thie work for the sole purpose of passing examinations.

The only way to help poetry regain its proper function and freedom is to read plenty of poetry to the children, vary it as much as possible, and allow the poet to do his own work. There are many other interesting points Mr. Senior raises, for example: art alone cannot save the world. Human character alone can do this. Twelve men built up the community of Christian peoples, not through art but character—love, faith, courage, etc. The artist cares not a fig for anything save his art. See Shaw in "Man and Superman," Act I, Tanner says to Octavia, "The true artist will let his wife starve," etc., but lest I outstay my welcome I had better end here.

Northwood, April 19th. W. A. G. KEMP.

Whilst I am prepared to admit that "The Poet and the New Era" contains some very sound suggestions for the founding of an International Utopia after the last "All Clear," I think that the writer has in many places allowed his enthusiasm to run riot to the detriment of logical common-sense.

May I at the outset state that poetry has no stauncher adherent than myself, and when I refer to the "poet" I include all creative artists, for I contend that all true beauty is creative.

Mr. Senior levels his rather unwieldy lance against wealth, property and business in a manner that seems to suggest he may be envious of these adjuncts to living. To state, as he does, that "the vulgar man, on the other hand, cannot indulge in thought because he is oppressed by things such as wealth, property, business . . . euphemistic variations upon the great theme of human selfishness which drowns the melody of personality and leaves the man a mere robot," is to make a very rash generalisation. I know many people who have wealth, business and property and are even so true lovers of poetry. They have used their material wealth for the betterment of their less fortunate brethren and for the advancement of their poetic ideals, though at the same time, they did not compose epics on their own magnanimity.

Byron, Mr. Senior informs us, was "worth more to Greece than all the British politicians put together." I do not think that Byron suffered any form of financial paucity. Did Shelley, Milton or the Swan of Avon? It did not impair their literary achievements to have no wolf at their door.

Does Mr. Senior suggest that it is to the detriment of the "workers" (a most unpoetic word!) to have 1,000 million pounds in War Saving Certificates? They are at least doing something tangible to bring about the brave new world of which he seems to dream so complacently.

I venture to suggest that had Mr. Senior experienced the agonies of drifting aimlessly upon a vast, open sea in a small rubber dinghy or upon a raft after having been torpedoed (which, thank God! I haven't!) his tastes would run, not to grand opera, but to solid food and to drinkable water.

To state that such things as food and clothing are but the "accessories to mere existence" and of lesser consequence than books or grand opera, is to leave the reader in some doubt as to whether or not Mr. Senior is writing with an effort to be consciously humourous. It is more likely, that lost lost in the maze of his own verbosity, he has missed the line of demarcation that exists between food for thought and food for consumption. For myself:

I pray to God as each day ends,
Shower down Thy love upon my friends,
And help me, in the pleasant duty
Of worshipping Creative Beauty.
And ere my supplication ends,
O! Lord, increase my dividends!

Milford Haven, May 8th. NOEL A. JONES.

"CONCENTRATE ON CONCENTRATION"

Mr. Wm. Anthony Wickham's letter in the March-April issue of THE POETRY REVIEW I read with much pleasure, and thought I would like to add to his concluding "word of advice to all beginners" a tag or two of my own—only to find myself involuntarily running into verse. Well, here it is! It says what I wanted to say better perhaps than prose. Whatever the poetry, I still think it good advice. One thing that neither Mr. Wickham's letter, nor my own perhaps too prosy poem, touches upon.

That one thing is *brevity*. Beginners, and I fear, a pretty good percentage of the old hands, write much too much. I offer "Concentrate on Concentration" as a valuable rule to be born in mind for the cure of diffusiveness. Quality, not Quantity. *Well said is soon said!* Enough:

Sure, 'tis with Art, e'en as with Love and Life,
Who o'er Reality would draw a veil,
Discarding law, and order, and restraint,
Rejecteth Wisdom, and must surely fail;
And, boasting to reveal the Infinite,
Is ever baffled and but darkens Light.

The things most worth in our own souls abide,
And lie, too oft unseen, neglected there,
But ne'er from seeking eyes doth Beauty hide
Her treasures unexhaust—for ever fair;
Not in the faraway Mysterious,
But in the heart she dwells—the heart of us!

Brightlingsea, May 10th. ERNEST J. BRYANT.

WAR AND POETRY

I noticed with interest in THE POETRY REVIEW (Jan.-Feb.) a letter by H. W. Harding on "Realism In Verse." I am a young *and* new member and the enclosed verse shows my humble opinion on the subject of war and poetry:

Why must we moderns be engrossed with war
When spring is here?

I *will* not sing of planes and tanks and guns,
Nor build new worlds in thought,
Nor will I sing the song
Of battles fought.

Poets should sing of all the lovely things,
Lead sordidness and pain
And blood and ghastly fear
Into the light again—

So in the twilight cool and grey
The blackbird sings
His song of peace, "the day
Is over now, and all is still—

True peace is here—"

Wimbledon, April 16th. PEGGY BOND.

THE EXPLOSIVE POWER OF POETRY

May I venture to oppose Mr. Raymund Bourne's statement that poetry cannot break through the structure of language. The aim of the artist, under which term I naturally include the musician and the poet, is to reach reality and truth. Each in his own way tries to express this reality as he himself sees it so that others may benefit by

his experiences. Might I say that true poetry aims at expressing poetic truth and would it seem too paradoxical to state that poetic truth, neat, is quite inexpressible? All that the poet can do is to get as near it as he can. Without language, nothing is left, Mr. Bourne would affirm; but this is not so. Without language the particular attempt in question to express poetic truth does not exist, but it is ridiculous to say that the existence of poetic truth (or its approximate personification in poetry) is thereby affected.

Surely when Francis Thompson declares of Shelley that "His thoughts scorch through all the folds of expression: his cloth of gold bursts at the flexures and shows the naked poetry" he means that the very core and spirit of poetic truth floods the poetry of Shelley. Somehow, the whole is something more than the sum of the words constructing it. Genius has been at work, and what is genius but the ability to apprehend intuitively the central truths and realities? By his attitude Mr. Bourne denies to poetry and the sister arts that power of approaching the unknowable which is their chief strength and value.

Grosvenor Square, W.1. PETER RAILY.

EMILY BRONTË AND "LOUIS PARENSELL"

The interesting notes in THE POETRY REVIEW for January on the Brontë family refer to Emily Brontë's supposed lover, "Louis Parensell." Some stir was caused in literary circles by the announcement of the discovery of the MS. of a poem headed by Emily Brontë with the title "Louis Parensell." But all inquiry and research failed to produce any information about him; although of course that does not prove that Emily Brontë was not in love. Competent students of human nature have observed that girls very often are. Unfortunately for the romance, somebody else looked at the MS. and discovered that the heading of the poem was not "Louis Parensell" but "Love's Farewell." So Louis was relegated to the limbo of ghosts, but wearing the halo of an immortal literary joke.

The Athenaeum, London, S.W.1. EDWARD VANDERMERE FLEMING.

Apropos your poetry and music references, by profession I am a constructional engineer but very well known as a singer. You will then realise how closely connected are my two recreations, poetry and singing, indeed, they are inseparable. Many singers and musicians do not realise that poetry without music can be a joy to hear or read, while a song without words can be a delight, but the vocal art without poetry would be meaningless and fail utterly, yet the average singer considers vocal art first and the poetry he uses not at all. In this direction I have some interesting experiments which prove that the *good song-writer* is inspired by good poetry, while the commercial writer admits he knows nothing of poetry and is incapable of knowing whether a poem is good or bad. No wonder then that to-day finds the vocal art and song-writing of this country at the cross-roads of God knows where.

Bedford. ENOCH DALTON.

One seems to be constantly weighing values of all kinds these days. Taxes must be provided for. The war must be fought. But the other war, too, the war of the spirit, goes on. For me, THE POETRY REVIEW carries the flag of the spirit. I pin my faith to that. When I lift my eyes to it, I hear a firm rhythm for my feet, through all the confusion and conflict. That is no slight thing. Believe me, it is no slight thing. In his inspiring book, *The Vision of Asia*, Mr. L. Cranmer Byng quotes a reference to "the struggle for that profound spiritual independence which grows from reverence of our own life." The power in the REVIEW is related somehow to this, I believe—this struggle, this reference. It is a truly creative power, and the world needs new life.

New York, March 17th. ADELAIDE RICHARDSON.

THE POETS' FELLOWSHIP
THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

We should like to tell all young poets—and most older ones too—to use words as if they had to give coupons for them. The value of restraint is one of the most important lessons a poet can learn : the remembered phrase is the one that puts much in little, that puts all human grief and pain and loss in one cry or a world's joy in one brief stave, that paints an unforgettable picture in a line. There are many ways of squandering words, the commonest being, perhaps, the use of unnecessary adjectives. The adjective so familiar in conjunction with a certain noun that the two have formed a cliché must be cut out, as must the redundant adjective : it is as unnecessary to label the sun "golden" as it is to say "midst the surrounding plain," and it is well to remember that a description need contain no adjective at all ; other parts of speech can describe just as effectively. There must, on the other hand, be no obvious striving after effect ; novelty is not gained by the introduction of adjectives or words that are merely irrelevant—so often a picture is broken by such. The bizarre and the banal are equally to be condemned.

A poet should have the faculty not only of seeing, *but of making others see* the marvellous in the simple ; his vision should be translatable into words that the world can understand. He must make the world cry "Of course it is so ! Why did I never see it so before !" The world has not time to wade through a sea of obscure metaphors and far-fetched analogies to find the poet's meaning : still less has it time to struggle with faulty syntax and involved constructions. Just as logic is necessary to poetry, so is good grammar ; the English language is long-suffering in many respects but it does like to have its sentences finished and its verbs in the right place. There is nothing laudable about being obscure at any time, but the obscurity that comes from failure to write grammatically is merely lamentable.

The standard of entries this time is, on the whole, disappointing. Some even of our most competent competitors have failed to achieve more than ordinariness, skilled versification that lacks the breath of life. The entries from the two premium winners, C. M. Bacon and Doris Major, have a certain distinction that merits the award. The two in the Highly Commended class Frances Pritchard, Bournemouth, and Phoebe Rayner, Rivington, also show a true feeling for poetry and skill in its expression. Out of a large "field" fifteen others are sufficiently meritorious to gain commendation, some for one thing, some for another ; some write too much, some without sufficient care, some without sufficient cause, some too laboriously. Perhaps by next time the breath of spring will have entered into our poets. The Commended are :

Dorothy Birch, Bournemouth ;
Kathleen Carew, London ;
D. R. W. Carr, Ferryhill ;
Reginald C. Eva, Harrow ;
H. W. Harding, Twickenham ;
Monica Jarrett, London ;
F. C. Markwell, Coventry ;
Eva Metzger, London ;
J. S. Parsons, Bolton ;
George Price, R.A.F., Middle East ;
W. T. Shorthose, Meir ;
Bertha M. Skeat, Sedbergh ;
Dorothy Trail, Vancouver ;
Gladys Ward, Worcester ;
F. F. Wilks, Salford ;

The usual premium offer for the best poem or poems submitted to the Premium Editor during the month (without limitation of subject) is continued. Not more than four lyrics or one long poem should be submitted. MSS. should reach "The Premium Editor, The Poetry Review, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1," by June 10th, accompanied by stamped addressed envelope, and if criticism is desired, 2s. 6d. (For a more detailed postal criticism, 5s. should be sent). It is essential that

entrants to this competition be members of the Poetry Society or registered subscribers to THE POETRY REVIEW, and that each poem bears the name and address of the author. (Entries received after the formal closing date are carried forward to the next adjudication).

CAPT. DAVID TENNANT, in the Desert, translates three VERSES OF A VIRELAY, by EUSTACE DESCHAMPS (1340-1410):

It seems, and who shall say me nay,
My face and body do delight;
My gentle lips are scarlet bright.
Am I lovely? Tell me pray.

Beneath my brows my eyes are grey;
Round chin and such a little nose;
My throat is white as any rose.
Am I lovely? Tell me pray.

Tall and slim I walk my way,
I have slender hands and arms.
All for love are all my charms—
Am I lovely? Tell me pray.

THE MISSING PORTION OF GOLDSMTH'S "RETALIATION" (EPITAPH ON DR. JOHNSON), RECENTLY DISCOVERED (!) BY HOWARD PARSONS.

Here lies Samuel Johnson, and fallen the tower
That afforded good shade while seeming to lower.
Though true to his friends as mortal could be,
He passed by Old Brandy, but stopped for Bohea.
His Davy he loved, but with Garrick grown great,
He thought of him still as in pupilage state.
To Bozzy, his crony, was giving always—
A groatsworth of blame or a crownsworth of praise.
With that sprightly Scot, Scotland toured with a will,
Yet of Scots, and of Scotland, he ranted his fill.
For he loved a good fight, for right or for wrong,
Folks dared not his stick, so he battled with tongue.
But many he routed were pleasantly thrilled,
For the vanquishment left them enlightened, not killed,
And if all that he said had been written instead,
For one that had listened, a thousand had read;
And the quill in his hand, when his muse bade him sing,
Made far higher flight than it did when in wing.
Though some from his politics took leave to vary,
All honour his name for his great dictionary.
For the words of our language they roamed where they would,
Till Johnson ordained them; to stand where they should,
To mean what they say, to mean it for aye,
And to be at one's call by night and by day
With all their credentials. Now, nigh past belief,
A genie appears if you fall the right leaf—
The word that, conjoined, wafts you straight up to bliss,
As "dreams" linked for aye to the word "avarice."

"HE THAT SERVETH"

(In Memoriam : Arthur Russell)

WE mourn a friend, to some of us unknown
Beyond a printed line or written word
Of guidance, whose unfailing kindly tone
Brought life and music to a voice unheard.
Kind, but how just! How shrewd, and yet how fair
His judgment. May his finished work obtain
Like measure in the balance Otherwhere,
No single effort being counted vain.
Our pride and duty is to offer praise
To him who gave it with an eager hand
Where merit lay. No eloquence of phrase,
No glowing language waits at our command;
We do but render homage to a friend
Who served the cause of Poetry to the end.

[*This sonnet embodies many tributes received from contributors to the helpful, discriminating consideration they had received from our late New Verse Editor and their sense of loss and sorrow.*—Ed.]

Centenary of a Great Poetry Publishing House

Daniel and Alexander Macmillan, founders of the firm which bears their name, published their first book one hundred years ago in 1843. This centenary is to be celebrated by the establishment of a number of literary awards for men and women in the Forces of the British Empire and the United States, and by the publication of *A World of Books,* by Charles Morgan, the distinguished novelist and poet, an essay on publishing, on the men who built up a great international business, on their methods, their ideas, and their relationship with their authors—all seen in the light of the changing values and manners of the last hundred years.

The brothers Macmillan first occupied premises at 57 Aldersgate Street, E.C., early in 1843, and moved in the same year to Cambridge. In 1858, the year after Daniel Macmillan's death, a London branch was opened in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden. The remarkable expansion of the business caused its headquarters to be moved to London in 1863. They remained in the Covent Garden district until 1897, when the firm built its own premises in St. Martin's Street, W.C., which it still occupies.

In these days of change it is interesting to note that family continuity in the direction of the business has been maintained to a remarkable degree. Sir Frederick Macmillan and Mr. Maurice Macmillan, sons of Daniel, and Mr. George Macmillan, son of Alexander, actively directed the firm until their deaths in 1936. Since then Messrs. Daniel and Harold Macmillan, M.P., sons of Maurice, and Mr. William Macmillan, son of George, have been Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Director respectively.

The firm's activities cover the whole range of literature, history, philosophy, economics and sociology, as well as scientific and technical treatises and all classes of educational books, but it is for their distinguished, pre-eminent association with poetry that we pay tribute to them. Until lately the first page of The Poetry Review has been filled almost continuously with their lists of notable new books within our particular province.

Famous nineteenth-century authors whose work was published by Macmillan include Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Christina Rossetti, W. E. Henley, Walter Pater, Charles Kingsley, and of course the most famous anthologist, Palgrave, and Lewis Carroll.

Among those poets whose careers have closed quite recently may be named, Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, W. B. Yeats, AE (G. W. Russell), Rabindranath Tagore, Maurice Hewlett and Stella Benson.

Outstanding poets of to-day whose work figures in the Macmillan catalogue include Laurence Binyon, Edmund Blunden, Vera Brittain, Ralph Hodgson, Eric Linklater, Charles Morgan, Sean O'Casey, Edward Shanks, Osbert and Edith Sitwell, James Stephens and Edward Thompson.

In the Macmillan Centenary Awards poetry is not specifically included, but £500 is payable to any British-born man or woman between the ages of nineteen and thirty-five serving in any branch of the Armed or Auxiliary Forces of the British Empire, or a similar award of $2,500 to any American citizen between nineteen and thirty-five serving in the American Armed Forces, for the best book of general literature by such authors in the categories of biography, autobiography, essays or belles-lettres.

THE BALLET

The other night I dreamed.
Fantastic creatures
Flitted, skipped
Across the stage.
Strange colours
Mingled, melded
Until all was colour,
All was music.
And out of all these whirring shapes
Loomed faces.
White faces with red lips—
And feet, white as the faces
Whirled and twirled
Like a merry-go-round.
Reds, scarlets, blues
Flashed and faded.
The music rose
And fell.
The faces drew near
The feet danced faster
Faster still.
And all was far away
Except the white faces
Except the white feet
Dancing their fantastic dances . . . .
And then the music stopped.
The feet were stilled
The curtain fell.
And I awoke to the sound of roaring traffic
In the grey morning.

CYNTHIA MORRIS.

PLEA FOR SURVIVAL

We want to live a little while;
Beneath the wave, wake with a smile
As from dark hours, the dawn awakes,
Just as a wave towers and breaks;
Beneath the wave, we gasp for breath
And rise to breathe, to sink, face death;
And from the deep, beneath the wave,
The arms of love reach out to save,
We want to live a little while
Beneath the wave, wake with a smile.

Pittsburgh.

MARIE TELLO PHILLIPS.

Mr. Arthur Vivian Burbury, M.C., Mrs. Phyllis Reader and Miss Margaret Knight were awarded The Poetry Society's Gold Medal for Verse-Speaking by Mr. E. Guy Pertwee at a recital on March 20th, by holders of the Adult Silver Medal. The examiner remarked that for once the selections given were definitely suitable to the occasion and the speakers and were of high and serious quality. Six out of the seven candidates had included a poem by Browning : the unrestricted choice included poems by Humbert Wolfe, Lionel Johnson, Siegfried Sassoon, Roy Campbell, Stephen Spender, Robert Frost and John Donne. All the candidates displayed the sustained vocal and artistic effort expected at this stage. Technique had been blended with the observance of prosody, pattern, rhythm, timing, and the other delicate factors necessary to the perfect vocal interpretation of poetry.

New subscribers are reminded that The Poetry Review is due about the first of the first month covered by the issue, and we regret that publication has been delayed by labour conditions until well into the second month lately. Copies are supplied as soon as available, and it is hoped a gradual recovery of time will be possible.

It is a sustaining consolation in these difficult days to receive such spontaneous appreciation of our unique fellowship as the following : "It gives me much pleasure in renewing my membership of The Poetry Society. My association with this truly cultural fellowship has lasted over many years, bringing much joy—mainly derived from the pages of The Poetry Review, but also from the happy personal contacts that have been established. Long may our Society flourish, extending its beneficent influence and continuing its spiritual work in a world which tends to be marred through the undue emphasis too often laid upon the illusion of materialistic accomplishment."

Wanstead, E.11, May 18th. Arthur Lynnford-Smith.

A Liphook member writes when renewing her subscription : "May I say that the contents of The Poetry Review have far exceeded my expectations, high as they were, and that the articles have greatly helped me in the preparation for English exams. and for the entrance exams. to the universities."

I have great pleasure in enclosing my subscription for the current year. This I have augmented as before, knowing well that the Society during these difficult days needs more than ever the fullest support possible from all its members. May I say how deeply I appreciate the wonderful work the Society is doing, encouraging and inspiring all who love poetry, through these anxious times. My Poetry Review is always such a very real source of interest and delight to me. With my heartfelt good wishes for the Society's continued success. Muriel Symmons, Salcombe.

The Poetry Review comes like light and healing to me in the Argentine. I pass on my copy to other friends here and so widen the circle of those capable of appreciating such a classic Review. Lydia Dean, Cordoba.

The Poetry Review is a continual inspiration to me. W. R. Latham's article, "The Quest for Beauty," in the November-December issue is superb. So long as poetry flourishes civilization will flourish too. Laura Emily Mau, Atlantic City, N.J.

Mr. H. W. Harding makes the plea : "Let us work hard to enlarge and extend The Poetry Society." There are constantly new opportunities for this endeavour. When this country made the appeal for books for the armed forces, I saw the oppor-

tunity to add to my donation of books and, not without a tug, sixty-six issues of THE POETRY REVIEW. To assist these messengers to vault the discard basket—age is sometimes deceiving to the uninitiated—I wrote a personal message to the soldier-poet on the cover of each magazine. It was a message-plea that the poet would record *that* intimate moment which comes to bear him witness, and on his return to find awaiting him a sweet fellowship in The Poetry Society. Yes, opportunity does arrive for all who are on the lookout: ELEANOR THORNE, New York.

I cannot write without again paying the highest of tributes to the brilliant manner in which THE POETRY REVIEW is maintaining its standard in spite of all war difficulties. It is in such marked contrast to the deterioration one sees and so much regrets in other journals: WILLIAM WOLFF, author of "Poetry of Retrospect" and other POETRY REVIEW articles and reviews.

I have been a member since March 29th, 1926, and am proud of my complete file of THE POETRY REVIEW from January, 1926 to April, 1942, inclusive. During all these years, in spite of changes in my address, only one REVIEW ever went astray, and it was cheerfully sent to me on my request for the missing copy. Now we, too, are in this war the sight of this little magazine is very heartening to those of us who are members of The Poetry Society, Inc., here in this part of our country, who are friends. You who have kept the creative spirit alive through The Poetry Society during all these trying years have done so much for the morale of your own people as well as those into whose homes the little magazine comes regularly. May God's blessing rest upon all who labour to keep alive the things which count so much to our way of life: ELLA JEAN BALLENTINE (San Marco, Calif.)

With a deep sense of gratitude I am renewing my yearly subscription to THE POETRY REVIEW, for the joy and inspiration I have found in its pages. In maintaining its high standard of work, under most trying conditions, it has set a record of international importance in cultural attainment. I am proud to be on your subscribers' list.
San Francisco, March 8th. ELIZABETH HOWE HARRIS.

I look forward with great anticipation to each issue of THE POETRY REVIEW and I derive great joy and satisfaction from its pages. Most of the articles and poems inspire courage and hope and one feels in good company with its writers in a time when spiritual thought and faith are so desperately needed. It is also a great inspiration to find English and American thought between the same covers and to learn how close is the bond between us. The activities of the Poets' Fellowship, with its competitions and premium reports create great interest and expectancy, especially when one's daily routine is rather exacting. RACHEL E. BOULTON, Winscombe Vicarage.

A copy of THE POETRY REVIEW came into my hands for the first time last night and I should like to say that I feel it's the most exciting discovery I have made for a long time: P. COCHRANE, London, N.W.11, March 27th.

I must thank you for my first copy of THE POETRY REVIEW: to me it represents a new estate of fresh green fields of adventure, promising deep dark woods of new thought, very desirable patches of greenery and freshness in new verse, and the refreshing brooklets of ideas from which I hope to derive great benefits.
Coventry. P. T. LOLE.